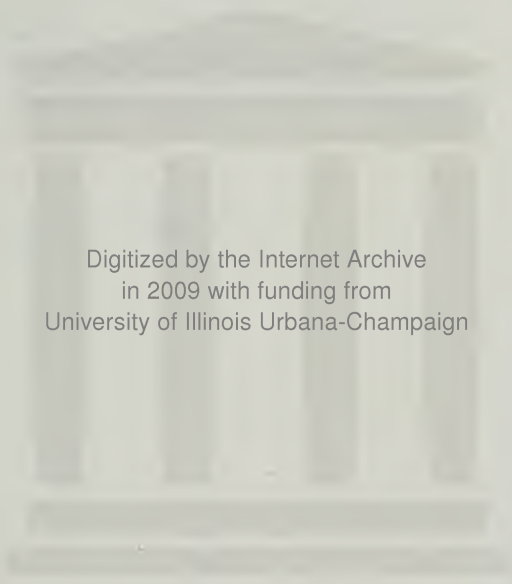


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GRASVILLE ABBEY:

A ROMANCE.



GRASVILLE ABBEY:

A ROMANCE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

“ See yonder hallow’d fane ! the pious work
“ Of names once fam’d, now dubious or forgot,
“ And buried ’midst the wreck of things which were.”

THE GRAVE.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR G. G. AND J. ROBINSON,

PATERNOSTER-ROW ;

By R. Noble, in the Old Bailey.

1801.



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GRASVILLE ABBEY.

CHAPTER I.

MORTALITY.

“ — The grave, dread thing!
Men shudder, when thou’rt nam’d.”

THE GRAVE.

“ THE blessed Virgin aid and protect thee! and when this poor frame, now worn out with infirmities, and sinking in the grave, shall, ere to-morrow’s sun, rise before its Creator in an immortal state, — oh! may I then be placed over thee as a guardian angel, though invisible to my child! — Weep not, Matilda, but” —

Such were the words delivered by madame Maferini to her daughter, as

the latter held the dying hand of her mother, and in an agony of grief listened to those instructions, which she was certain would be the last she ever should receive, from a parent whose maternal tenderness and affection was the most sincere, and of which she now would severely feel the loss. Madame Maserini immediately after fell into a fainting fit, which lasted so long, that the nurse as well as Matilda thought she was no more; but in this they were mistaken; for to the joy of all her attendants she recovered, and inquired, as she had repeatedly done before, whether her son (who was an officer) was yet arrived; they answered her in the negative; for as he had been informed several times that it was thought his mother's disorder would prove fatal, it was known he might obtain leave of absence from his regiment, which was then stationed in Flanders. But some
little

little time before, an express had been sent to him, setting forth that madame Maferini was much worse, and they thought her life in great danger; they also mentioned that it was her particular desire to see him; he was therefore now expected every hour: but after this fit she said she should not survive that evening, and seemed extremely impatient to see her son; she said she had something of the greatest importance to communicate to him, which she refused to relate to her daughter; but still finding that he did not arrive, she asked for her confessor, when to her inexpressible surprise and grief she was informed that he was sent for, that morning, by a sick relation, ten miles off, and was not yet returned; she called for pen and ink, and though so weak as hardly able to be supported in her bed, with great pain and difficulty she wrote several lines, then dropped her

pen, clasped hold of Matilda's hand, and expired.

The grief of all who were present was most poignant; but particularly that of Matilda; she now beheld herself an orphan with a very small fortune, which was not sufficient to support her genteelly without some other addition; she was bereft of a mother, whose good instructions and advice she could now no longer receive; in short, she was distracted.

Not many minutes after the dissolution of madame Maferini, the physician came in; he found the attendants stupefied with grief, and Matilda in the same posture as she was at the moment her mother expired; he parted her hand from that of the corpse, which she pressed to her bosom, and bathed with tears; but she had the presence
of

of mind to take up the paper on which her mother had wrote, and when she entered her chamber, threw it carelessly in the escritoire, without once looking at the writing; in short, her mind was in such a state that for many hours she had not the least remembrance of the affair.

About half an hour after the decease of madame Maferini, Alfred her son arrived. When he first heard of his mother's illness, he would have set off for Paris directly, but was prevented by the indisposition of a superior officer. Immediately as he received the last express, he obtained leave of absence for a month; and left Flanders the day after; but unfortunately, in one part of his journey, where he was obliged to ride on horseback, the animal took fright and threw him; he was taken up for dead; but being only stunned

by the blow, he soon recovered; yet it served to detain him a few days; as soon as he was able to stand, he made the best of his way to the city, but arrived too late to receive the important secret that madame Maferini so much wished to impart to him.

Madame Maferini was the youngest daughter of a nobleman whose power and dignity were well known in all parts of France; having no son he resolved to aggrandise his name through his eldest daughter; for which purpose he determined to place his two youngest in a convent; and, if possible, to prevail on them to take the veil; in this case, the fortune he would have been necessitated to have given them, might be added to that of their eldest sister, which most likely would procure her a husband of great note; he could then have his name transferred to his
son-

son-in-law, and by that means the family honours would descend to posterity, the same as by male issue:—thus did the unjust marquis intend to bury from the world two amiable young women to satisfy an empty and ridiculous ambition.

The marchioness died when the children were very young, and it was reported through his ill treatment;—the marquis now thought it full time to put his scheme into execution; he accordingly persuaded the young ladies to be boarders for a few months, which they both readily agreed to; he accompanied them himself to the convent of N****, and affected the greatest grief at parting from them; in private he begged the lady abbess to let no opportunity pass that might hasten their desire of taking the veil.—Felicia, the youngest, seemed perfectly contented

with her situation; but her sister, who was of a more lively disposition, very much disliked it; and though the greatest art was used in order to make her take to a religious life, yet it all proved ineffectual; for, at the year's end, though the former determined to comply with their wishes, yet Clementina declared her aversion to them, and proved obstinate in her opinion; she used all the arguments in her power to persuade her sister to relinquish the thoughts of making such a place a residence for life; but Felicia was so charmed with the convent and its inhabitants, that she constantly replied, nothing in the world should ever tempt her to leave them; she accordingly took the white veil.—Her father (who constantly received intelligence) read the news with the greatest pleasure; but it was in some measure damped by hearing that Clementina had so great a dislike

dislike to follow her example, and that she wished much to be permitted to return home:—this request he resolved not to grant; as he thought time, and a little more use to the rules and orders of the place might work an entire change in her sentiments.

It was at this period Louis XIV. ascended the throne of France: and, among others who had business to transact at court on that occasion, was a young gentleman, the son of an Italian of large fortune.—He brought with him from Italy his sister, whom, by order of his father, he was to place in the convent of N****; the day she was introduced, he had an opportunity of seeing Clementina; he was struck with her beauty, and delighted with her conversation, and afterwards had several other interviews; for by the orders of the marquis she was permitted

to see any one in company with the lady abbess, or any other person whom she could depend upon; this kind of behaviour, he thought, would be more likely to win her over to their purpose, than by laying her under any restraint; her disposition being naturally good, and by far more inclined to yield to entreaty than force.—Signor Maserini often came on visits to his sister, who was placed with her ladyship, and the chosen companion and friend of Clementina:—it was at these times, when no one was present (which would often happen, the marquis's orders not being strictly attended to), that he would declare his passion, which he might plainly perceive was not listened to with dislike. Clementina felt a strong partiality for him, which soon ripened into love; she told him the state of her affairs; but when he entreated her to elope with him from the convent, she
always

always reminded him that they must expect nothing in point of fortune from the marquis.—That, he answered, would not give him the least concern; for his father, who had no other children except his sister and himself, was worth a considerable deal of money, and had often told him, provided he could meet with a wife, whose birth, virtues, and accomplishments, would bring no disgrace upon their house, that wealth would be no object to him, as he should be able to give him enough to keep them, not only in plenty, but in affluence.

Clementina's mind was on the rack which way to resolve; if she rejected the proposal, she would most likely be obliged to continue in the convent for life, and be constantly harassed with the importunities of all about her to take the veil; which would be worse
B 6 than

than death; on the contrary, if she consented to fly with signor Maferini to Italy, she must run the hazard of travelling many miles, and when she arrived in that country, would see no one that she knew, except himself and his sister;—the thoughts of leaving Felicia, the difficulty of escaping, and the idea of what would be the consequence if they were discovered, made her shrink with horror from the thoughts of leaving her present habitation; thus she delayed coming to a resolution for near six months, when one morning, as she entered a closet belonging to the lady abbess, she perceived on the floor a letter directed to her ladyship; it was her father's seal, and was broken; she at first hesitated whether she should read it, but at length determined to see the contents, which were, "that the marquis thought the manner in which she was treated, was too mild,
and

and begged that for the future she might be closely kept to her chamber, and stricter methods had recourse to.”—Ready to faint, she ran to signora Maferini, who was equally surprised at the discovery, and wished her to comply with her brother’s solicitations.—Clementina, after some little time resolved to accept his proposals; in the afternoon he was expected, and they thought that would be a good opportunity to inform him of their determination.

CHAPTER II.

SIGNOR Maferini called in the afternoon, as was expected; he only saw his sister: those methods being already put in execution, which the marquis had mentioned in his letter; she informed her brother of the circumstances that had happened in the morning, and also acquainted him with Clementina's resolution to leave the convent. At these words he was in raptures; but they were soon subdued by the thoughts of what difficulties must be surmounted to escape from it; for Clementina was totally confined to her chamber; not even signora Maferini was permitted to see her; these orders had been given about an hour before; the young friends had therefore only time to fix, that

that whatever resolutions the latter intended to put in practice, she was to write them down, and contrive to drop them in the hand of the former at evening vespers; but both the brother and the sister were at a loss how to elude the watchful vigilance of the different people belonging to the convent, till a scheme, proposed by signora, seemed as if it would prove favourable. She told her brother to go to the house of father Abfalom (a priest), who was expected that night at a late hour, to have a conference with the lady abbess, and to tell him her ladyship could not receive him; he should then procure a dress as much like father Abfalom's as possible, and, at the same time when he was to have attended, to come to the gate of the convent, through which he might pass unnoticed, if he would hold up his handkerchief so as to cover his face, which the reverend father generally

generally did to avoid the night air; by this means he might get to the lady abbess's apartments: but, instead of entering them, to turn short round a contrary way, that would take him to a winding staircase, which, after descending it some time, would terminate in a large vaulted chamber; and in this place he was to wait the arrival of Clementina and his sister.

"But how is it possible," returned signor Maferini, "if you should be able to meet me there, that we can escape? You will certainly be known."

"Leave that to me," said the lady. "We shall also be disguised as friars: and when you again pass the attendants accompanied by us, they will naturally suppose you have been with her ladyship, and are returned with two of your brethren; be sure to have a carriage at
a little

a little distance, which will by day-break convey us a few miles from these detestable walls; and by to-morrow evening we shall probably arrive at some little village, where we may, in the same dresses, remain in safety till the pursuit that will be made after us is partly over; and we shall then be able to proceed on our journey to Italy without interruption."

Signor Maferini, after having thanked his sister a thousand times for her excellent scheme, took his leave, in order to prepare for the elopement. Immediately after he was gone, the lady wrote down those particulars they had just before agreed on, and the exact manner in which Clementina was to act:—at evening vespers they met; and when the ceremony was over, she received from her friend the billet without discovery; as soon as she entered her
sister's

sister's cell (which was the place where she was confined), she burst into tears. Felicia, who had not been able to attend vespers, on account of an indisposition which obliged her to keep her bed, was astonished, and begged to know, in the tenderest terms, the cause of her grief; but Clementina was unable to speak.

The convent bell had now done ringing; all was silent, except the wind, which howled through the apartments; the dim lamp that hung in Felicia's cell was obliged to be removed, as hanging too near a casement, it was in danger of being extinguished. Clementina placed it on one side of her sister's bed, and by its light, observed in her countenance a death-like paleness; she pressed Clementina's hand to her bosom, and once more begged to know why she wept;
the

the latter, by degrees, and with the greatest circumspection, informed her of her intentions of leaving the convent; horror showed itself in every feature of Felicia, while she listened to the relation; at length, overcome by surprise, grief, and weakness, she fainted. Water stood by: her sister, hardly able to support herself, applied it to her relief, and had the presence of mind not to make any noise. After some minutes, she recovered, but was almost too ill to speak. Clementina supported her in her bed, and received the last words of her sister with a look of anguish and madness.

“Clementina,” said Felicia, whose voice was hardly articulate, “heaven preserve you in this hazardous attempt! Oh! my sister, may you see many happy years; and while the sunshine of prosperity

perity sheds its beams upon thee, may they never be obstructed by the chilling wind of adversity. Almighty Father!" she exclaimed, (and crossed herself with the greatest fervency) "in this my last hour of dissolution, when the soul is near parting from mortal dust, to fly unfulfilled to a merciful and heavenly Creator, vouchsafe to incline thine ear to my last prayer and dying supplication! preserve, O Lord! my sister, through that path of life in which it shall please thee to place her, from the temptations and snares of the wicked; and when she is under the rod of affliction, inspire her with fortitude and resignation to bear it without murmuring; that with religion and piety she may descend into the grave, and rise again an angel of purity, ready to fly into the arms of her Saviour, her Redeemer, and her God!"

Clemen-

Clementina supported her as well as she was able; she spoke no more, but survived about five minutes, and expired in her arms.

CHAPTER III.

THE situation of Clementina was now dreadful beyond expression; the distant tinkling of a clock at a remote part of the monastery proclaimed the hour was ten; the wind, which had been so very high, had entirely dropped, and the moon, quite obstructed by heavy clouds, could not be discerned; large drops of hail beat against the windows, and by degrees increased to a violent storm; the most tremendous claps of thunder followed fast on each other; flash after flash of vivid lightning darted through the shattered casements, which had no shutters; this war of elements was by far more dreadful, it being an uncommon time of the year,
the

the latter end of January. The body of Felicia lay still in the arms of her sister, who, totally insensible, rested her hand on the same pillow, till a violent clap of thunder, which shook the convent, roused her from this rêverie; she started up, and at first hardly knew where she was; but recollection soon came with redoubled force; it wanted but one hour to the time when she was to meet her friend; she was unable to come to a resolution in what manner to act: she took up the letter she had received from signora Maferini, and read it once more over.

She still considered that if she escaped, she might once more be happy; but if she remained in the convent, there was not the slightest hope that she should ever enjoy another hour of peace or comfort. She had now no one to leave, that could any way claim her

her regard or tenderness: the maternal love and affection of a mother she had never known; her father had not fulfilled that tender name by either assiduity or kindness; her eldest sister she hardly ever saw, as she was placed, before her remembrance, with a relation of her mother's in Germany, who took the care of her education. The old lady visited the marquis but once only, accompanied by his daughter, and then made but a short stay; yet in this little time, the lady Eleanor's behaviour to her sisters was proud and disdainful, so as not to call forth either esteem or fondness; as to friends she had none, except signora, for the marquis never suffered them to cultivate any acquaintance. Felicia would have been the only cause that could have made her leave the convent with regret; she, alas! was now no more; she had conceived a sincere friendship for
signora

signora Maserini, and her heart plainly told her, her affections were placed on her brother; she therefore thought it would be more prudent to run the hazard of eloping with two persons by whom she was certainly beloved, than remain in a place where her life would be made uncomfortable. But still she was chilled with horror at the thoughts of being discovered; and the loss of her sister greatly preyed upon her spirits.

It was now near the time when she was to repair to signora Maserini's room: she put some trinkets of her sister's, which Felicia had given her before she took the white veil, into a small silver casket which she could place in her pocket, and among them the picture of her mother; she shed a flood of tears at the thought, that if the original had lived, how happy she might now

have been; she then, according to the directions in the letter, wrote with her pencil feigned memorandums relative to their escape, and the names of several roads quite contrary to those they meant to take; and dropped this book in the place where it was most likely to be found.

Eleven o'clock now struck, and the hail had in some measure abated, though the thunder and lightning still continued, when Clementina took a last farewell of her departed sister; she embraced the corpse, wept over it, and was for some time unable to move, till she at last tore herself away from the body, and with her eyes swimming in tears, implored the Author of all events to support her in the few critical hours she must undergo. With a trembling hand she then unbarred the door, which opened into a long gallery, on each side
of

of which were different cells; she could not take the lamp, for fear of the light glancing into any of the apartments; and was therefore only guided by each flash of lightning that came through a large window at the further end. So weak, as hardly able to walk, she at length arrived at the casement, and sat down on a seat under it to recover her strength. The way she had already come was by far the most dangerous on account of discovery, there being one or more inhabitants in each of the rooms she had passed; she now went through several passages that led to a large vaulted chamber, and from thence began to ascend a stone stair-case that wound round the south tower of the convent, and took her entirely away from the cells below belonging to the nuns, to the sleeping rooms of the boarders above. The thunder in this place had a most awful sound: the lightning,

though it could only enter a small painted casement which stood at a great height, yet served to show the gloomy horrors of the place.

She was already half-way up; but terrified at the thoughts of her situation she rested for a few moments against the old iron railing, when a light step seemed to move on the same stair. Almost convulsed with horror, she shrunk back, and was fortunately unable to call out, when at the same moment a strong flash of lightning darted from the window above, and showed her the figure of a man; the sight of it was but momentary, and all again was silent and dark; with breathless agitation and considerable quickness, she ran up the other part of the stair-case, flew across two passages, and arrived at the chamber of signora Maserini; she gave the signal they had fixed

fixed on, and the door was carefully opened by her friend, who with astonishment received Clementina, fainting in her arms.

She soon recovered, and informed signora of the death of her sister, and also of the event that had so much alarmed her; the former intelligence she was surprised and grieved at; but the latter, concerning the person on the stairs, she told her was her brother, who was to wait in the chamber below; this circumstance signora had neglected to mention in the letter, which might have been the cause of discovery: she insisted on Clementina's taking a glass of wine, and helped her to dress in the apparel of a priest, and then made herself ready in another disguise of the same kind.

She now thought it full time to at-

tend her brother, and begging Clementina to support herself through this great trial, she softly opened the door; they proceeded to the stair-case, and descended it. It was quite dark, the thunder and lightning being over.—When they had got to the bottom, signora, in a whisper, called her brother, who instantly answered; he was going to congratulate them on having got so far without discovery; but his sister stopped him. “This,” said she, “is not a place for compliments.”—They all three then re-ascended the stair-case, passed through a long passage, and arrived at the door of the lady abbess’s apartments; they stopped there about two minutes, and then holding their handkerchiefs partly over their faces, they crossed a large hall, and arrived at the door at the further end;—they here passed two persons, who made no inquiries. This door led
them

them to an inner court, and from that to an outer one, in which there were several porters; but they, supposing them to have returned from a conference with her ladyship, asked no questions. They had now only to pass the outside gates, which they did in the same manner, without any obstructions, and saw themselves totally free from the convent.

Signora and her brother were overjoyed at their good fortune; but Clementina, though she was happy in having escaped, yet sorrow still hung upon her brow; they walked about half a mile, and then entered the chaise that waited for them; signor Maserini's servant was on horseback; they desired the post-boy, whom they were obliged to acquaint with the whole affair, to drive as fast as possible, and he might depend on being rewarded. Signora

acquainted her brother (who had very tenderly inquired after Clementina's health, and the cause of her melancholy) of Felicia's death, and begged him not to force her to talk ; that her spirits, which within a few hours had been so greatly shocked, might again be a little composed.

This observation was just :—Clementina had in a little time gone through a great deal of trouble : the surprise and concern which followed the finding of her father's letter, the grief she felt at those orders being so soon put in execution, the terror and anxiety she was under when she read signora's billet, the sudden shock of her sister's death, the horror she felt during the storm, with the alarm she received on the stair-case, and her dread of being discovered the whole night, conspired to overwhelm her with sensations almost equal to madness ;

ness; her looks plainly confirmed that she was exceedingly ill, and it did not escape signora or her brother. He was almost distracted to know in what manner to act. To wait for advice, would be equally as bad as to discover themselves; yet to see her in such a state without any aid, was distressing beyond expression. He could not persuade her to take any nourishment, though he had provisions in the chaise to prevent their stopping on the road for any thing else than to change horses. Signora was extremely sorry to see her friend so much indisposed; she perceived a fever was coming on; she therefore advised her brother, about three o'clock in the afternoon, to order the post-boy to turn out of the high road, and drive into a wild part of the country, which though it might take them out of the way they intended to go, yet in such a place they might find some retired

cottage where they could stop for some time in safety ; for she was very certain Clementina would not be able to proceed on the journey.

Her brother consented, and ordered the boy accordingly, who turned into another road, which led them to a wild heath, and from that to a remote solitary forest. They continued in one track for some miles, till it began to grow dark, when they descended into a deep valley, at the bottom of which was a cottage that stood by itself. The chaise then stopped, and signor Maserini and his sister alighted ; they were obliged to help Clementina carefully out, who, supported by each of their arms, walked up to the retired dwelling, which seemed to be the residence of virtue, contentment, and happiness.

CHAPTER V.

ADVERSITY.

“ Daughter of Jove, relentless pow’r,
Thou tamer of the human breast,
Whose iron scourge, and tott’ring hour,
The bad affright, afflict the best !
Bound in thy adamantine chain,
The proud are taught to taste of pain,
And purple tyrants vainly groan,
With pangs unfelt before, unpitied and alone.”

GRAY.

“ WHO would not relinquish the gaudy pomp and splendour of a court, the costly robe, the sumptuous feast, the deceitful courtier, and all the pride of empty greatness, to spend their few remaining days in such a cot as this ? The happy pair, blessed with each other’s love, whose health and strength permit them to earn their daily bread, and care for no one, might here enjoy repose,

and, with comfort to themselves and others, breathe out a life of piety and virtue." Such were the thoughts of signor Maferini, as he aided to support Clementina to the door of the cottage; he knocked, and it was opened by a young man who seemed not yet to have attained his twentieth year.

"Friend," said the disguised priest, "admit under your hospitable roof three travellers, who for one night beg a lodging, and will repay you to the utmost of their power, with gratitude and prayers.

The young shepherd—for such his dress denoted him to be—courteously invited them into a small clean room, where, on one side of the fire, sat a man and woman seemingly much advanced in years, and on the other a beautiful young girl, who looked to be
about

about eighteen; they rose, and seemed greatly surprised at the entrance of the priests: the old man instantly ordered supper for his reverend guests, after assuring them they were sincerely welcome.

Signora Maferini placed Clementina next to her, while her brother went to the post-boy, whom he liberally rewarded, told him to make the best of his way home, and acquaint his master he had been with only one gentleman, quite a different road from that they had travelled; he then re-entered the cottage with Edward, whose horse they turned loose in a field behind it. Clementina, since he had been out, had fainted, and was just recovering.

Amazement might be seen in each face of the cottagers; that three priests should ride in a chaise attended by a
servant,

servant, was strange, as such sort of people usually walked; the effeminate beauty of two of them was remarkable; and then one of them fainting, was astonishing. Signora thought it would be better to inform them of their situation at once, and trust to their generosity in concealing them; she therefore gave her brother the hint, and called on one side the old woman, whom she acquainted with the whole affair; while he did the same to the man; they both greatly wondered in what manner they could escape, but readily promised their protection.

Clementina all this time seemed totally insensible of what was going forward, and, in short, was in a state of stupidity; for she hardly gave any answer to those questions that were put to her, nor could they persuade her to take any nourishment; she was therefore.

fore undressed and put into a warm bed ; neither the brother nor the sister could partake of the homely fare that was set before them ; but about eight o'clock signor Maferini left the cottage with the young shepherd and Edward, and walked to a small cot, that belonged to the father of the former, who was acquainted by his son with the history of the gentleman he had brought. There was one bed to spare, which signor Maferini took possession of, and Edward slept with Cyril, which was the young man's name.

La Faril, the old cottager, insisted on his daughter Sabina sitting up with Clementina, and begged signora to retire to rest, as he was sure the fatigue she must have undergone must make sleep very necessary ; she took his advice, and lay down in a small room
next

next to Clementina's. Both La Faril and his wife gave Sabina charge to be very careful of the young lady, and then they themselves bowed under the influence of the drowsy god.

Signor Maferini was at the cottage early the next morning; he eagerly inquired after Clementina's health, and was informed by Sabina, that she was very ill, and had been delirious the greater part of the night; she was now asleep, but was so disturbed, she feared it would not refresh her; neither his sister nor her mother was yet up, and her father was gone out.—He had not changed his dress, but was still in the disguise of a priest. He asked Sabina, whether there was any medical man lived near; she said there was one about three miles off, who always attended their family; he asked her for a direction,

direction, which she gave him ; and not considering the hazard he ran, he resolved to go to him.

It was hardly light when he set off: he had not got above a mile, when he was accosted by a man who was crossing the same field.

“ Father,” said he, “ there is sad news.”

“ What, my son?” replied signor Maferini.

“ Why,” returned he, “ there are two young ladies gone off with a young man, who, they say, is brother to one of them, from the convent of N****; and the other, who is daughter to some marquis, has poisoned her sister, for she was found dead in the morning.”

He

He then continued to give an account how it was supposed they had escaped; and a man, whose chaise was hired the same night, had some thoughts it went a different road from that the post-boy informed him; for, upon inquiry, no such carriage had been seen in the places through which he said he had passed. He concluded with saying, he supposed the strictest search would be made after them, and that he heard the news from a friend who had travelled post all night, and arrived at his cottage about six that morning.

It happened well that the man was so pleased with his own discourse, as not to take much notice of his hearer; for it would not have required a very acute observer to have seen his countenance change several times; he wished much to return back directly; but then
his

his companion would certainly remark it; he therefore thought it best to continue walking till he could part with him without being noticed. Fortunately, an opportunity offered about half a mile further, when the man turned short into a lane, and wished him a good morning. He ran back as fast as possible, and found breakfast quite ready; he told them the cause of his precipitate return; and they all allowed it was not unlikely but the cottage might be searched; but their perplexity and horror were still increased, when he informed them of the suspicions that had fallen on Clementina, concerning Felicia's death; but they all agreed by no means to inform her of any part of the adventure.

There was now the greatest necessity for them to be concealed; for as there were no witnesses to contradict an affair
which

which by appearances seemed probable, he was distracted to think, that if they were taken, Clementina might suffer the punishment of a murderer: and in such cases strict inquiries and search were made through France. In what manner to act, they knew not; Clementina was too ill to travel; and if she could, there was not a doubt but they would be overtaken; the officers might be there in three or four hours' time; and La Faril would run a great risk in concealing them. Edward had no change of dress; he arrived at the cottage a little while after his master in the morning; Cyril, the young shepherd, who, they found, was to marry Sabina, had set off early with his father on a short journey, and would not return till night. Both of them had promised secrecy, and begged signor Maserini and his servant would sleep there as long as he thought proper. None
of

of them could think of any scheme to prevent discovery, till Sabina said,

“ Father, is there not at the bottom of the garden a cave which none knows of besides ourselves ?”

La Faril instantly turned pale, and answered, “ Yes, my dear : but it will, I am afraid, be too damp for the sick lady.”

“ Is it not possible,” said signor Maserini, “ to have it warmed by fires ?”

They all agreed it would.

“ Then, for heaven’s sake, my friend,” answered her brother, “ let us begin about it directly.”

All hands were set to work ; Edward made a fire in it immediately, and conveyed

veyed feather-beds, provisions, chairs, a table, candles, a lamp, oil, tinder-box, matches, and every other utensil that could any way make it comfortable. The cave extended a great way back under some hills which rose at the bottom of La Faril's garden; the entrance was entirely hidden from the eye by thick moss and shrubs which grew round the bottom of the eminence;—it seemed to have been a retreat at the time Henry the Fifth conquered France.—The present possessor, who by chance discovered it, had never disclosed the secret to any but his own family;—for a son of La Faril's, who turned out exceedingly wild, but was since dead, committed a robbery about ten miles from the cottage, and for fear of being taken, begged his father to conceal him in the cave, which was accordingly done; and the officers of justice, though they searched every part
of

of the house and garden, did not perceive the entrance of it. It was at the recollection of this circumstance that La Faril turned pale when Sabina mentioned the cave; for it was very necessary they should keep the knowledge of it in their own bosoms, as he would be punished, if it was known, for screening his own son from the rigour of the law.

About two o'clock in the afternoon, every thing was ready: but though great fires had been kept in it ever since ten in the morning, it was yet damp; they therefore thought it best not to enter that night, but early the next day; and then signor Maserini could instruct Cyril and his father in what manner to act. — Edward was placed at a window on the top of the cottage, with a glass, so that he could perceive any one coming that way with-
in

in a mile; and that notice would be time enough for them to make their escape to the garden: he was also to sit up all night in the cave to keep in a large fire, that it might be thoroughly aired by the morning.

Clementina was better, and perfectly sensible and composed;—signora ventured to inform her of the affair relative to her brother's meeting the man in the morning, carefully concealing that part concerning the death of her sister. She was not so much alarmed as might have been expected, and seemed extremely happy in the contrivance of the cave. Since the sleep she had in the morning, though it was much disturbed, she had mended, and was now able to sit up for an hour to have her bed made. She ate a little supper; and in short, through the good attendance and management of her hostess, Clementina seemed perfectly

fectly recovered from those dangerous symptoms of a fever which appeared the night before.

At nine o'clock, signor Maferini took his leave, and walked to the cottage of Cyril and his father; he informed them of the whole affair concerning the cave, by permission of La Faril, who knew them to be too much his friends, to discover it.—Signor Maferini begged both of them, if any inquiry should be made after him, to declare they knew nothing of him; he conjured them to lay the same injunctions on a young girl who was a distant relation to them, and kept their house; all which they promised faithfully to perform. The place was so exceedingly retired, that none of them had been seen, except by La Faril, his wife, and daughter, Cyril, his father, the young girl, and the man before mentioned; nor was any stranger

observed in that part, sometimes for three months together; and the only way they had of procuring provision, was by going to a small town four miles distant. Signor Maferini thanked both the father and son for their hospitality towards him, and after wishing them a good night, retired to his bed.

CHAPTER V.

THE dejected lover had now time to recollect his situation; though his father was exceedingly fond of him, yet there was a haughty pride and obstinacy in his disposition, that made him tremble lest he should disapprove of his proceedings: — it was true, he had several times told him, that, with respect to his marrying, he should consider wealth as no object; but used always to lay a particular stress on his consent being first obtained; this last circumstance he had never mentioned to Clementina: — he also knew him to be whimsical and capricious, insomuch that it would not be unlikely, should they ever be so fortunate as to arrive in Italy, but he might refuse his consent

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to

to their nuptials, though not capable of alleging any reason for his dislike. He therefore determined to persuade Clementina to be married to him, before they made themselves known to his father, whom they could easily deceive by telling him the ceremony had not been performed; if he approved of her as his daughter, it was all very well; if, on the contrary, he rejected her, it would be out of his power to part them, as she would be his by the most sacred ties on earth; for, should the worst happen, and his father totally discard him,—at the death of a brother of his late mother's, no one could prevent his taking possession of a very good fortune: and, till that period, which was not likely to be long, his uncle being a man much advanced in years, he could support himself and wife by industry and application to his pencil, which art he was a proficient in, though
he

he only learnt it as an accomplishment. But still the thoughts of their being discovered again intruded on his mind, and he shrunk with horror from the idea that Clementina might suffer an ignominious death: — sleep refused its aid, and the rest of the night was spent in melancholy reflections on the dangers they had passed, and disagreeable conjectures on those that might still be to come: — he rose about six, more fatigued than when he retired to rest, and took the advantage of the darkness of the morning, to walk to the cottage; he found them all up, as they had determined to enter the cave before day-light. Clementina was considerably better; signora Maserini was in good spirits, but they were damped by seeing her brother look so ill: — she, however, concealed her uneasiness, for fear of alarming Clementina, who had also taken notice of it.

After a hasty breakfast, they thought it full time to proceed to the garden; it was a disagreeable morning, though not so cold as might have been expected for the time of year; yet, there was a chilling dampness in the air, which made it far more uncomfortable than a severe frost; and a few small stars, scattered about the heavens, gave the heavy black clouds, which encompassed a large space, a more dreary appearance. — It was just beginning to grow light, when the melancholy party came out from the cottage. La Faril went first: his thoughts were fixed on the similarity of the present scene with that when he conducted his only son to the same gloomy habitation.

The recollection of this circumstance drew a tear from his aged eye; for the good old man could not help paying that tribute to his memory, though he
had

had shed many on account of his vices and extravagancies. Signor Maferini walked after him; he was wholly taken up with the idea of their being discovered; and when he looked on Clementina, who rested on one arm, while his sister laid hold on the other, he almost cursed himself for leading her into so much danger.

Clementina was distressed to see him look so ill, but feared nothing while she was under his protection.—Signora had no misfortunes of her own; to see them happy, she thought would make her so; and therefore her anxiety or happiness was heightened or decreased according to the situation of her brother and her friend,—Sabina and her mother followed, with their hands and eyes lifted towards heaven, imploring blessings on their visitors, and praying that they might remain undiscovered.

When they arrived at the cave, La Faril touched the secret spring, and the door flew open; — they were received by Edward, who had, as he was ordered, kept good fires all night, so that the place felt perfectly warm: their conductor then told them that Sabina should come every night after it was dark, to inform them if any thing particular had happened, and to be useful in any way that might serve to make them comfortable:—signor Maferini returned him a thousand thanks for his kindness and friendship.—La Faril and his family then took their leave, and the door closed after them.

The cave, as was before mentioned, ran a great way back;—it was divided into three regular apartments, which, though narrow, were each of them long:—the first they made their sitting room; in the second signor Maferini slept;

slept ; and in the third, Clementina and his sister. — Edward had a small bed placed for him close to the entrance, that he might be ready to give an alarm, if he heard any noise that seemed to threaten danger. — They received no light but from candles or lamps : — this, added to the antique manner in which it was fitted up, and the hollow echo that sent back every sound they uttered, gave the place a gloomy and melancholy appearance ; — but, disagreeable as it might seem, it was to them a comfortable retreat ; — it might preserve them from their enemies ; and with that hope any situation would be acceptable, though, if possible, ten times more disgusting than that they now possessed.

Sabina arrived at the cave about ten o'clock at night, attended by Cyril ; — they informed signor Maserini that no

inquiries had been made after them that day ; but they had heard the king's officers were within a few miles of the place ; and there was not a doubt but they would remain there until the next morning. The young lovers stopped about an hour, and then took their leave.

CHAPTER VI.

IT was near twelve o'clock when signor Maferini, who had been reading to Clementina and his sister ever since the departure of Cyril and Sabina, declared he was fatigued, and proposed going to rest; they both readily consented, and had retired to their chamber about a quarter of an hour, when Edward ran into his master's room, with the news that the officers were certainly arrived, for he had heard them talking close to the cave.

Fortunately, he did not speak loud; and signor Maferini, who was just beginning to undress, desired him not to disturb the ladies, and he himself would come to the door and listen to their

conversation.—They both proceeded to the mouth of the cave; the wind was high, and the noise which it occasioned among the trees, prevented them from hearing but now and then a few words. The first person whose voice they could distinguish, was Cyril.—Signor Maferini was very glad he was there;—he seemed to be talking to one of the officers——

“ You see,” said he, “ there are no signs of a place where we could conceal any one, even if we had ever such an inclination.”

“ Hold—not so fast, young man,” answered a stern voice;—“ we shall search particularly this place; for I remember, some years back, being here on the same errand, after a young thief, who, though he was seen to enter this cottage, yet could not be found;

found;—he was, I believe, that old man's son."

"Ah!" exclaimed La Faril,—“call him not by that name; he is now no more; and those epithets are ill bestowed on one who has long since been in his grave, and is by this time partly turned to earth again.—Here the old man burst into tears, and, as they supposed, retired to the house: for they heard him no more.

The officers stopped about half an hour, during which time Cyril remained with them.—Signor Maferini wondered at his having stopped so late, but looked on it as a fortunate circumstance, as La Faril was too weak and infirm to attend them in a proper manner.—He was exceedingly glad to think that neither his sister nor Clementina had known any thing of the matter,

ter, and pleased himself with the thoughts how happy they would be, when he informed them the affair they most dreaded was now over; nor were his conjectures wrong; for his intelligence gave them the greatest pleasure.

The following night, Sabina arrived at the cave;—she told them that when Cyril and herself entered the cottage from seeing them the night before, the father of the former had called to tell them the officers were within two miles of them; he had heard it at a place where he had been in the afternoon; they therefore thought it would be best for Cyril to stay all night, in case they should come at a late hour to surprise them. It was fortunate they took that precaution; for about midnight they were knocked up by the unwelcome visitors.—Cyril let them in; and after their coming from the garden,

den, they stopped about a quarter of an hour, and then departed.

Their only fear was now to fix in what manner they should proceed to Italy without discovery; but at all events they determined to remain in the cave at least a month, that the affair might be in some measure forgotten; and they could then consult what disguise would be the most proper for them to travel in. They had resided in their habitation near a fortnight before La Faril dared to make them a visit; but receiving intelligence that the officers were certainly returned, he took the first opportunity to see them, and proposed they should travel to Italy in the disguise of Savoyards, as he had dresses which would fit them, and every thing proper for that character; they having been made for a masquerade.—His scheme met with the greatest approbation,

bation, and they accordingly set about carrying it into execution.

In about three weeks every thing was prepared, and the morning fixed when they were once more to venture forth in search of happiness.—Sabina and her mother attended them very early, in order to assist in putting on the dresses.—La Faril arrived soon after; and at six o'clock they thought it full time to set off, as it would be necessary they should get some distance from the cottage before day-light.—La Faril made signor Maferini perfectly acquainted with the way across the country: and, in case any questions were asked them by the villagers, they were to reply they were going to Italy, the place where such sort of people mostly reside.—Cyril also attended to take his leave.—The spring of the cave was turned, and they once more
breathed

breathed in open air ;—yet the thoughts of leaving the place which had preserved them from their enemies, created a pang in their breasts, and particularly since they knew not how soon they might once more wish to be confined within its close recess.—Signor Maferini clasped La Faril's hand, and stammered out his gratitude, accompanied with tears, while the good old man, whose silver hairs and aged form denoted those pearly drops which hung upon his withered cheek were not the first soft emblems of his feeling heart, pressed him to his bosom ;—then, almost overcome with weakness and the effect of years, he nearly sunk insensible on the earth.—This was too much for signor Maferini ;—he pressed his sister and Clementina to hasten their departure, and hurried away from the spot to which he before seemed rooted.

It was an exceedingly cold morning; and the twinkling bright stars which illumined the heavens, plainly showed it to be a severe frost.—They got three miles from the cave before day-light, and continued travelling without any disagreeable circumstance happening on the road, except the curiosity of the peasants, whose homely entertainment and good nature made ample amends for their ignorance.

After some days they had the pleasure to enter Italy.—Signor Maferini hired lodgings some miles from his father's residence, and intreated Clementina to become his, before he made himself known to him.—She was very unwilling to consent; but at last, overcome by the persuasions of the brother and the sister, he had the rapture to receive her as his own, about a fortnight after their arrival.—The only difficulty

difficulty that now remained was to make it known to his father, which he determined to do in about three or four days after their marriage, but first wrote to La Faril.—In the letter he inclosed a considerable present, and sent it by a friend who was going that way, as he was certain every method would be taken to intercept any letters directed to him, as La Faril lay under the greatest suspicion in point of concealing his son, as well as signor Maserini.

The day arrived on which he was to pay a visit to his father;—he begged his sister to stay with Clementina, as she would be in want of company, and was a stranger to the place.—He set off early in the morning, and after some hours' quick travelling, during which time his ideas were entirely taken up in thinking of his father, and in what manner

manner he should be received, he arrived at the large heavy gates of the abbey.—With a trembling hand he pulled the bell, but could not hear it ring.—After another attempt, he found the wire was rusty ; yet it made a noise. A thought struck him, which chilled him with horror—his father might be dead!—for he made himself known to no one since his coming to Italy, but his friend who carried the letter to La Faril ; and he could give no intelligence concerning his friends, as he arrived the same night as signor Maferini, from Spain, was taken ill, and did not go out till he proceeded on his journey to England, when he promised to leave the letter as he went through France.

CHAPTER VII.

THIS idea had not crossed his mind five minutes, before a man and a boy approached him:—he asked them if they could tell the reason why that abbey was uninhabited?

“Heaven blefs you, mafter!” said the man:—“you muft furely be a ftranger in this part, if you have not heard of the old gentleman’s death who lived here.”

Signor Maferini turned pale;—the bridle dropped from his hand, and he muft have fallen upon the ground, had he not been received in the arms of the villager:

“You

“ You are not well, fir,” said the man, as he placed him on a seat under the large heavy portico of the abbey.—
“ Lubin, run and get the gentleman some water from yonder spring.”

The boy obeyed, and brought some in a pitcher which he had in his hand ; he was persuaded to drink a small quantity, and soon recovered.—He informed the peasant he was a distant relation of the late count, and was come upon a visit to the abbey :—that the hearing so suddenly of his death had quite overcome him.

“ Ah, your honour,” replied the man,—“ there has been strange doings for these last six months ; heaven knows best ;—but one cannot be hanged for thinking, as the saying is.”

“ Strange doings ! for heaven’s sake,
explain

explain yourself, friend," said signor Maferini:—" for I have the greatest reason to be interested in the affairs of the count."

" If you will step with me to my cot, signor, I will relate to you the circumstances that have happened.—My wife expects me home to dinner, as I must return, in less than an hour, to my labour in yonder vineyard."

He readily assented;—and having walked a small distance, they arrived at his habitation.—The horse was turned into a field.—When they entered the cottage, a neat middle-aged woman was preparing dinner: they wished much their guest would partake of their homely fare; but he could not eat.—They had not resided in that part above six months, therefore

therefore knew nothing of signor Maferini's person:—he conjured the man to begin his narration; and the honest husbandman complied, as follows——

“ You, no doubt, signor, were acquainted with young Percival Maferini, and his sister Sifera, the only children of the late count; twelve months have not yet passed, since they both took leave of their father at that very abbey, and travelled into France, on account of some business which required Percival's attendance at court, as Louis XIV. had just then ascended the throne. Sifera was to be placed in the convent of N****, while her brother staid, which they supposed would not be above four months, and then they were to return together:—the count for some time received letters from them both: but though the business which caused
their

their journey was finished at the expiration of the four months, they did not by any means seem inclined to return to Italy ; and in a little while after, their correspondence dropped ;—for though letters were continually sent to them, no answers were received.

“ This gave the count great alarm and he wrote to a principal person near the place, concerning them : in a little time he received information that his son had run away with a young lady, from the convent of N****, where he had placed his sister ; that she also had eloped with them, as well as the servant who stopped with Percival in France :—he concluded with saying, the strictest search was making after them, as it was supposed the young lady had poisoned her sister, who was placed in the convent with her, had taken the white veil, and was found

dead in her bed, the morning after their departure.

“ This news, signor, was like a thunderbolt to the old count :—he had not a doubt but they would be taken. From that day he drooped, and in about a week after was laid up with a violent fever. Count d’Ollifont, his nephew, was sent for.”—Here Percival trembled : he knew D’Ollifont to be his enemy.—The man continued—“ He attended his uncle with the greatest tenderness, infomuch that he recovered enough to sit up for a few hours every day, and dispatched him to find some intelligence of his children : he accordingly set off for France, but returned at the end of the second day, with a letter which he acquainted his uncle was given him on the road by a messenger, sent from France for that purpose ; it came from a friend of his who
resided

resided there, and acquainted him that both signor and signora Maferini were no more; that the former had fallen in a duel with an officer of the guards, who was going to secure them; and that the latter was seized with a violent grief, which turned her brain, and she had found means to poison herself, unknown to those who had the care of her: that lady Clementina was placed in the Bastille, till it was settled what punishment she should suffer; but that she was not married to signor Maferini. This news caused a relapse in the old gentleman's disorder. Nor was it he alone who suffered:—every domestic of his household, signor, shed tears for the loss of two amiable children, who were never known to give a tender parent one pang of sorrow, except in this circumstance, and that cost them their lives.”

“ Would it had ! ” repeated signor Maserini to himself.—“ That ever I should have lived to have seen this day ! ”

The woman was too much employed in cooking her husband’s dinner, and the husband too much taken up in eating it, and telling the story, to take any particular notice of him ; or else the inward workings of his soul might easily have been observed. The man continued—

“ The old count now grew considerably worse ; his physicians gave him over, and in about a week after his relapse, he died of a broken heart. When he heard of the death of his children, he altered his will ; the servants were all left mourning, and a genteel legacy ; old Absalom, a comfortable allowance for life ; his tenants a twelve month’s rent ; except which, and a few other legacies,

legacies, he bequeathed the whole of his fortune to Count D'Ollifont:—among the estates is Grasville Abbey, which has been shut up ever since the death of count Maferini; nor has any of the furniture been removed.

“ How happened that, my friend ? ”

“ I know not, your honour ; but folks say strange things ;—that there has been foul play, and that the place is haunted by the father and his children ; but it is known for certain, that count D'Ollifont intended to sleep there the night of his uncle's funeral, but could not rest : he started up about midnight, left the place with his servants directly, and the next week returned to Spain, where he was sent for at the time his uncle was taken ill.”

Signor Maferini inquired if he him-

self had ever seen any thing at the abbey to confirm the reports of its being haunted, and how he came to be so particularly acquainted with those affairs relative to its late inhabitants. •

“ Why, by old Absalom the steward, signor,” answered the man.—“ He lived just by here, but did not long survive his old master; and as to seeing any thing, as your honour talks of, I cannot say I ever did! but Dorothy once said she saw a light one night pass several of the casements in the west tower; this Dorothy declared she could take her oath of.”

“ Is there any way to get to the inside of the abbey?”

“ None, signor; each of the gates is well locked, barred, and bolted; and the windows are all fastened.”

After

After some further conversation, the man's dinner-time was expired. Signor Maferini rewarded him for his trouble, and then with a heavy heart mounted his horse and departed.

CHAPTER VIII.

“Expectation stood in horror.”

MILTON.

WHEN the iron rod of adversity falls suddenly upon us, and misfortunes of the most distressing nature unexpectedly darken our future prospects, surprise for a little time gets the better of our feelings; amazement and horror gain such an ascendancy over our intellects, that, in the relation of our griefs, we forget for some time the nature and cause of them, while we listen with attention to the frivolous story of the circumstances by which they were occasioned.

Signor Maferini was in this state, while the husbandman related to him
the

the account of his father, and the villany of count D'Ollifont. His astonishment was so great, that the death of the former, and the total loss of his fortune, were entirely forgotten, and he thought only on the falsehood his cousin had propagated. He left the cottage; his horse took his own course for some time; nor did he perceive he was entering by degrees into a thick wood, till some trees obstructed his way; he leaped from his horse, and threw himself on the ground; the thoughts of his situation now flashed on his memory, and the loss of his father he regretted with the most sincere grief. The imposition which had been put in practice to deprive him and his sister of their fortunes, excited both his surprise and anger; in short, the different emotions he felt, almost drove him to a state of distraction.

In this situation he remained for near two hours, till harassed through distress and fatigue, he fell into a slumber—horrid dreams disturbed him, and his sleep was both uneasy and disagreeable; yet he remained in this state of forgetfulness till it was nearly dark:—he started up and mounted his horse, which had not moved from his side; he remembered he had promised Clementina and his sister to be at home early in the evening: but that would now be impossible, as the wood was intricate, nor was he acquainted with the way out:—he wandered about in search of the right path for near two hours, but was unsuccessful, till chance led him to the direct track:—he followed it, and in a little time found himself clear of the labyrinth.—He was very ill, and hardly able to ride; the cold had seized him by being so long in the open air; he, however, continued a
good

good pace till he once more found himself before the gates of Grasville Abbey.

The night was very dark, the thunder rolled at a distance, and faint flashes of lightning followed one after another with considerable quickness; he stopped once more to look at the place where he had spent so many happy juvenile hours, and where he had that day hoped to have been received with cordiality and tenderness.—He had experienced the reverse: he had found his father was no more, and that he had been duped out of his right by one who was allied to him by the ties of blood, and, as he had supposed, by those of friendship.

A tear fell from his eye while he looked on the venerable structure,

every part of which seemed deserted; a gloomy stillness reigned through the heavy pile, nor was the solemn silence broke but by the bird of night, which had taken up its habitation under one part of the portico.—The idea of the place being haunted now entered his imagination.

“Would to heaven,” said he, “the report I have heard was true, that I might be permitted to converse, nay only to see the spirit of my fire! surely he would——”

Here he was interrupted by a strong flash of lightning, which darted right on his face, and was followed by a loud clap of thunder. Though he was struck silent, his eye was still fixed on the abbey; the noise of the thunder had not died away above three minutes, before

before a violent crash was heard at the other part of the building; it seemed like the falling of armour, and continued for some little time.

Signor Maferini was struck with astonishment; horror and expectation seized him at the same moment;—he turned his horse round, and rode to the side whence the noise seemed to proceed; all again was silent, yet he still continued looking on the place.—It was by the west tower,—he recollected the account he had heard of the light being seen there.—At the moment he was thinking on this circumstance, a faint glimmering passed a small casement in the very part of the west tower the woman had described; his situation may be more easily imagined than described; he was a perfect statue with astonishment; still he thought it might be
fancy;

fancy ;—but he was thoroughly convinced, when a stronger light appeared in the same place a few minutes afterwards, but disappeared in an instant :—every nerve was stiffened with horror ; he still drew nearer that part of the abbey ;—five minutes had not elapsed before the light again appeared in the same place ; he now plainly perceived a figure pass, bearing a lamp ; it vanished as quick as the former light had done ; and all again was silent and dark.

His passions were now wrought up to the highest pitch ; he galloped round to the front gates, alighted, and in vain attempted to enter the abbey ; — every entrance was strongly fastened ; his brain was disordered, and he still continued to force the doors ; but, after a long
time,

time, finding his exertions all in vain, he again mounted his horse, and rode as fast as possible towards his own home.

CHAPTER IX.

SIGNORA Maserini waited with impatience the return of her brother;—she wished much to hear of her father's health, and in what manner he received the account of Clementina:—nor was Clementina less anxious; her spirits were depressed; she trembled for fear of ill news, yet the vivacity of her sister-in-law supported her tolerably well through the day. Night approached, and the time when signor Maserini promised to be at home was expired:—his father might have detained him, several circumstances might have happened to make him later. With these thoughts they in some measure satisfied themselves till it grew late; they were then exceedingly unhappy at not seeing
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ing him :—the roads he had to come were often infested by banditti.

A little while after midnight, a loud rap was heard at the door :—Edward flew to open it ; neither Sifera nor Clementina could ask who it was, before signor Maferini stood before them :—his appearance for a moment struck them motionless with surprise ; nor was it to be wondered at—the disorder of his dress, and the wildness which darted from his eyes, made his figure altogether horrible.

“ How does my father ? ” asked his sister.

“ Well,” he exclaimed ; “ but if you wish to know, Sifera, ask the angels in heaven : they best can tell thee.”

“ Alas ! ” she cried, and burst into tears,

tears :—" my father is no more : I know it by thy looks,—by the strange answers you give to my questions."

" You are right," said he : " our father has paid the debt of nature."

He seemed now rather more composed; yet complained of violent pains in his head and limbs. Signora Maserini grieved much for the loss of her father :—she could get no further intelligence from her brother's discourse, which was very incoherent and difficult to be understood, but that her father was no more, and that they were duped out of their right; but by whom, and in what manner, she could not possibly find out. He talked much of an appearance he had seen in the abbey; but they looked upon it as the effect of a disordered brain.

The

The morning found them still more distressed. Signor Maferini was in a high fever, and quite delirious, his sister almost distracted, and Clementina very little better; Sifera immediately sent for a physician who lived near, and had always attended their family:—she hoped from him to receive some intelligence concerning her father's affairs, which the situation of her brother prevented him from communicating. Edward was dispatched, and in a little time returned with the gentleman they so much wished to see.

He was a character universally admired in Italy; his abilities were equally exerted in behalf of the poor, and those in a higher sphere of life; he was a friend to the indigent and distressed of every class; yet looked upon with admiration and respect by all who were so happy as to be known by him. Such
was

was the man who, with all the marks of astonishment and surprise in his countenance, was conducted by Edward to signora Maferini:—he informed her that it was supposed by all who knew them, that both her and her brother had been dead some time; he also confirmed the news of her father's death; she would not, however, detain him to relate to her how such a report had been spread, till he had first seen her brother:—he had some knowledge of the physician; yet every answer he gave to their questions, proved him in a state of insanity. Clementina and Sifera anxiously inquired the gentleman's opinion; he told them he had a very violent fever, and some very alarming symptoms; nor could he give any satisfactory answer concerning what might be the issue of his disorder:—he however assured them, he would do all in his power to forward his recovery.

They

They both returned him their sincere thanks.—Sifera begged to know how the report concerning their death could be believed; and the particulars of her father's dissolution, as she supposed he attended him in his illness.—He answered in the affirmative, and related to her exactly the same train of circumstances which the husbandman had before communicated to her brother.—Clementina was in the room at the same time he mentioned the account of her having been supposed to poison her sister.

Her situation is more easily to be conceived than described:—that she should be suspected to murder a sister whom she so dearly loved, and whose death she so much regretted,—the idea was almost too horrid for her to support:—an illness of some days followed the sudden shock she felt at the phy-

physician's recital ; for though no proof could have been brought to confirm so terrible a charge, yet she shuddered at the thought of the distress and horror it would have occasioned her.—They now wondered not at Percival's illness, and supposed his talking so much about the light and appearance in the abbey, was occasioned by the report of its being haunted.

New difficulties now perplexed them ; a week had elapsed, and no signs of amendment appeared in signor Maferini's disorder ; yet all their money was nearly exhausted.—In this dilemma they resolved to apply to the physician ; he immediately lent them as much as they desired :—and if at any time they should want more, he begged they would speak, and he would with pleasure accommodate them.

In

In about a month, signor Maferini began to alter for the better ; he talked more rationally, and by degrees gained strength ; in six weeks he was able to leave his room, and soon after, by the assiduity and judgment of the doctor, found himself nearly as well as ever.—He returned the good man a thousand thanks for his care and friendship, and hoped it would soon be in his power to repay him the sum he had lent them : he also begged him to contradict, as much as possible, the scandalous report his cousin had propagated, and make it known he now intended to live by the practice of his pencil.—The physician promised to comply with his wishes, and assured him he should consider himself happy to serve him in any respect.

Signor Maferini paid a visit to the old uncle, at whose death he was
to

to receive the fortune before mentioned;—he was astonished at the sight of him, railed at count D'Ollifont for his villany, and testified the greatest joy at seeing his nephew.

Percival now began to apply himself to his profession; he was soon known, but received with coldness by those who once called themselves his friends; his abilities, however, gained him patrons, and his industry preserved them; he was in a little time able to discharge his debt to the physician, and found he could earn not only a comfortable but a genteel provision.—He determined, however, if possible, to retrieve some part of his father's fortune, yet resolved not to act rashly, but proceed by a due course of law.—In the first place, he wished much to see the inside of the abbey; this took up a great deal of time; he was three months before

fore he could get a sanction to enter it; he had then to send to Spain for the keys, as count d'Ollifont had them in his possession, nor would give them up without great trouble; in short, it was near six months before he could gratify his wishes of once more seeing the inside of Grasville Abbey.—The light and figure he had seen in the west tower, continually haunted his imagination; and though he was not by any means superstitious, yet many disagreeable ideas served to perplex him; he, however, never mentioned the circumstance to any one since the recovery of his reason; not even to his wife or sister; as he naturally supposed it would prey upon their spirits, and make them fearful of his searching the abbey, which he was determined to do alone.—Having got the keys, the day was fixed for his departure.—Clementina and Sifera wished much to accompany him; he

begged them not, as he knew it would hurt his sister extremely, to enter the family mansion under their present circumstances, and could give no pleasure to the former. He accordingly set off, attended by Edward; they were detained a long time on the road by a violent storm, and did not arrive at Grasville Abbey till it was dark.

CHAPTER X.

SIGNOR Maferini did not intend to enter the building that night; yet curiosity prompted him to take a view of the west tower; he accordingly dismounted, and told Edward to hold his horse at the front gates, while he walked round the abbey.—Having arrived at that part where he had before seen the figure and the light, he stood some time observing the window, when a faint glimmering passed a small casement a little above it. He thought it might be fancy, yet in about two minutes saw it again; his resolution was now fixed; he resolved to enter the abbey directly; having returned to Edward, without communicating his reason, he ordered him to open the gates immediately.

The poor fellow was astonished, and naturally supposed his master's head was again affected.—“For heaven's sake, sir,” said he, “do not attempt to enter such a dreary place at this time of night, and in the dark.”

“Your light, Edward,” returned his master, “will serve me: therefore open the gates without delay.”

The man reluctantly produced the keys; great exertion was required to turn the lock; it, however, after some little time, yielded to force, and they beheld themselves in the large paved court.—Edward fastened the horses on the outside; at the front doors they were again detained on account of the fastenings being rusty; but after a little trouble, they opened them, and discovered the large hall or entrance of the abbey:—it was supported by columns
of

of the ancient orders, and arched over in the Gothic style; at the farther end were a pair of heavy folding doors, which led to an extensive suit of apartments; on each side was a flight of stone stairs, which wound round to the different rooms on both sides of the building.

Grafville Abbey was an ancient structure, and had, in former times, been a place of religious worship; some monks, at a time when Italy was involved in war, kept themselves concealed in this place, on account of atrocious crimes they had committed against the state, by keeping up a correspondence with the enemies of their country: they were all discovered except one, who secreted himself in an obscure part of the abbey, while his companions suffered the most severe punishment that could possibly be inflicted on them.—Their

only aim was now to destroy the surviving one: they accordingly found means to mix a large quantity of poison in some food, which he had concealed, and which they observed he partook of every day; the scheme succeeded, and he fell a sacrifice to their invention, for they found the victuals after that time were never touched; he died, however, in that part where he usually resided, for his body was not discovered till many years after; and the abbey from that time was called after his name.

The late count Maserini's father purchased the estate just before his marriage, and had the whole of the internal part repaired; from him it descended to his son, who resided in it the remainder of his life. Signor Maserini plainly perceived nothing had been moved in the hall; as every article was in the same order as if the place was inhabited, and
his

his father still the possessor of it; but the appearance of the furniture plainly told it had been taken no care of for some time. He began to ascend those stairs which led to the west tower.

Edward followed; but his master, after some little time, suddenly turned round, and desired he would wait below and take care of the horses; the man begged of him with tears, not to go alone.—Signor Maserini was pleased with this mark of his fidelity, and hastily replied,—“However strange, Edward, my conduct may appear to you at this time, believe me, I have the most weighty reasons to justify my behaviour; and, if I live to return, you shall be acquainted with them.”

He then ran up the stairs, and, strange as it may appear, was never seen again.

Edward stood for some time fixed with amazement; there was a mystery in his words and looks, which plainly told all was not right; he heard him ascend the stairs for some time, till the sound of his footsteps died away; and all was again silent:—he then walked slowly across the court, and seated himself under the portico; the night was not by any means cold; he therefore chose that place in preference to the inside of the abbey, as he was near the horses.—Sleep in a short time overpowered him, and he did not wake till two in the morning:—he thought it strange his master was not returned, but waited another hour with some degree of impatience; at the expiration of it he was seriously alarmed; yet to enter the abbey without a light, would be madness; he therefore resolved to defer it till day-break.

Edward

Edward had heard of the abbey's being haunted, yet he always laughed at the idea; his natural courage and intrepidity forbade his believing such fabulous reports:—the only reason he could allege for his master's stay, was, that the wind might have blown out the lamp when he was at some intricate part of the building; and in that case it would have been impossible for him to have found his way back, there being several suites of apartments which were never inhabited in the count's lifetime, and which signor Maferini might hardly ever have seen.

As soon as it was light he again crossed the court, and ascended those stairs which his master had done before; he followed the marks of his feet up a considerable height, and then traced them through several rooms that led to the west tower:—one of these, which was

F 5 rather

rather larger than the others, was covered with footsteps of different sizes; and in one part of it lay the picture of Clementina, which signor Maserini always wore next his heart; the ribband to which it was tied seemed as if it had been torn by force, and the boards were stained with several spots of blood; there was not in any other apartment the least mark of a foot, nor any signs of their having been opened.

Edward was astonished; he almost supposed himself in a dream; yet every object realized the scene; he knew not in what manner to act; to stop any longer in the abbey was of no use; yet to whom was he to apply?—He at length resolved to go immediately to the physician, and relate to him the circumstance, as he would be the properest person to advise with concerning those measures they ought to take relative
to

to signor Maferini's disappearance, as well as in what manner they should proceed in communicating the news to his wife and sister.

Edward took up the picture, and placed it carefully in his pocket; he then descended the stair-case, and closed the doors after him; but determined to lock neither them nor the outside gates. Having placed his master's horse in one of the stables belonging to the abbey, and mounting his own, he departed with the utmost speed towards the house of the physician.

CHAPTER XI.

EDWARD found himself at the end of his journey in a few hours.—Fortunately, the good man was at home, and heard his recital with the utmost consternation and surprise; he by no means approved of either the wife or sister being informed of this dreadful news till it was more fully confirmed; and having, from the servant's account, obtained two officers of the civil power to thoroughly search the building, he resolved to attend them himself; and they set off in less than three hours after Edward's arrival.

The evening was advancing, when they beheld at some distance the lofty towers of the abbey; they were therefore

fore obliged to defer their intention till the next morning.

Neither Clementina nor Sifera expected signor Maferini's return till the evening following the day he left his lodgings.—Edward therefore, informed the physician they would not be unhappy, though they should receive no intelligence from them.—As soon as it was light, they entered the abbey, attended by a workman who was able to remove any kind of intricate wood-work which might tend to a discovery. They first examined all those apartments that led to the west tower, and which, by the marks of the footsteps, seemed as if signor Maferini had crossed them: they plainly perceived the spots of blood, but could discover no other mark or clue to their wishes, in either of the rooms. They then searched each part on that side of the building; but their diligence

gence proved unsuccessful; in short, every recess of the abbey was looked into with the most scrutinizing attention; yet not the least sign could be discovered that indicated a mortal to have been in the place, except the footsteps and the blood.—They were all at a loss what to suppose; and about evening they finished their search, and left the abbey, more perplexed than when they entered it.—Edward took his master's horse from the stable, and shut the gates, but determined to leave them, as before, unlocked.

After a hasty meal, the physician, two officers, and Edward, set off for the former's habitation: it was very late before they arrived there; the men were liberally rewarded for their trouble.—Edward then consulted, what method would be the most prudent, to inform the ladies of this mournful event; the
old

old gentleman undertook himself the disagreeable office of communicating it to them the next morning; it was therefore agreed, that he should remain at his house till the affair was over:—they then took leave for the night, the one grieved for the loss of his young friend, whom he had loved and admired from his infancy; the other for an excellent master, whom he had revered and served from his cradle.

To describe the situation of Clementina and Sifera at the physician's recital, though he related the dreadful circumstance by degrees, and with the utmost caution, would beggar description; it will therefore be necessary to draw a veil over this affecting scene; and suffice it to say, their grief was little short of distraction.—The extraordinary manner of signor Maserini's disappearance left room for the most horrid suppositions,

tions, whilst the faint hope which the uncertainty of his dissolution inspired, served to make each cruel idea more terrible and lasting.—Clementina's situation was, if possible, more dreadful than her sister's, as she was in a strange country, and some time gone with child. The physician acted like a father to them both, and declared, while he lived they should never want a friend.

The wonderful event of signor Maserini's disappearance was soon spread over the country.—Grasville Abbey was now become a place of much greater terror than before, as those suspicions of its being haunted, seemed in all probability to be confirmed; none of the peasants would go near it after dark; in short, every inhabitant was surprised and terrified.

Six weeks had not elapsed, before
signor

signor Maferini's uncle died ; the fortune now devolved to his sister ; a more lucky circumstance could not have happened, as she would have it in her power to support Clementina and herself in a genteel and comfortable manner, without remaining under the least obligation to any one in point of pecuniary aid ; and the physician undertook to settle those affairs relative to the old gentleman's death.

In a little time, every thing was completed, and she found herself in possession of not only a moderate, but affluent income.—Signora Maferini now determined to make the life of her sister-in-law as agreeable as possible ; she knew that Clementina wished much to return to her own country ; nor had Sifera any desire to remain in Italy, where every object reminded her of her late
mis-

misfortunes ; she therefore resolved, after Clementina was brought to bed, to consult if some method could not be taken to clear her innocence in respect to Felicia's death, and a reconciliation brought about with the lady abbess ; so that they could, without impropriety, reside totally in France.

Clementina was delivered of twins, a boy and girl ; for some time her life was despaired of, although the judgment of the physician, and the tenderness of Sifera, were equally exerted towards her recovery ; but in six weeks, to the joy of both, she so far mended as to be pronounced out of danger.

Signora Maferini now resolved to ask the doctor's opinion concerning their appearance in France.—He offered to go himself to the convent of N****, and,

and, if possible, settle with her ladyship those disagreeable circumstances that had caused her displeasure.

Sifera returned him many thanks, and accepted his friendly assistance; they, however, resolved to let Clementina know nothing of it, till the business was finished; an excuse was therefore made for his leaving Italy, and his journey to France said to be on account of family affairs, which he had to transact in that country.—He was so fortunate as to return in a very short time, with the agreeable intelligence, that Clementina's character was entirely cleared, respecting her sister's death, and all their affairs settled at the convent, in an amicable manner.—This gave Clementina as much pleasure as it was possible for her to enjoy; every thing was ready in a few weeks; the parting with the physician was affecting

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ing on both sides; to speak of their obligations to him would, they knew, be the only way to make him repent of his goodness:—they were therefore necessitated to express their gratitude in as few words as possible.

A house was prepared for them in a private part of Paris, and every thing made ready for their reception.—In this state they lived for some years, and enjoyed as much happiness as the remembrance of those misfortunes they had suffered, would permit.—The children were their greatest care; they served in some degree to dispel that melancholy which had taken so deep a root in their bosoms since signor Maserini's disappearance.

Grasville Abbey remained in the same condition, except the gradual and slow decay of the external part: it was
taken

taken no notice of by its owner, while fear and superstition prevented any interruption from those who resided near it.—Count D'Ollifont continued but a short time in Spain after the keys were returned; he made a tour to England, and, as it was supposed, intended to settle there.

About twelve years elapsed, and nothing particular happened to distress signora Maferini or her sister-in-law, except the death of the physician and Edward; when the former was taken ill with a violent fever, and lived but a week; during that time she was delirious, but had before settled her affairs in such a manner, as to leave Clementina the chief part of her fortune.

Alfred and Matilda were now obliged to exert their childish abilities, to comfort their mother for the loss of her
only

only friend; she had often made repeated solicitations to be admitted to her father's favour; but the marquis was obstinate, and complained of her elopement from the convent, as an excuse for his cruelty.—Her whole attention was, therefore, paid to her children; and through a fond yet mistaken notion, she impaired her income, by giving them an education far superior to any situation in life she could ever hope to procure them; they, however, rewarded her love in the tenderness of their conduct towards her, and the quickness of their capacity in receiving those instructions that were given them.

Alfred already showed a wish for the army; his mother determined not to check his inclinations, though she dreaded the dangers he might be exposed to:—she therefore purchased a commission for him, and he soon after departed

departed for Flanders, where the regiment was stationed.

Madame Maferini had never informed her children of the dreadful manner in which their father disappeared ; she considered it might impress their young minds with a horror which might cast a gloom over the brighter scenes of life ; they were therefore always taught to believe signor Maferini was killed by a fall from his horse, when hunting ; nor was there any probability to suppose the real cause would ever be discovered to them, as neither Clementina nor Sifera had informed any one to the contrary.

About six months after her son's departure, madame Maferini was taken ill ; for some time it was thought only a slight disorder, but afterwards confirmed to be dangerous.—The most eminent

nent physicians were procured; but their exertions proved fruitless.—She now wished to communicate to her son that which she had so studiously kept from him; she determined, however, not to relate it to Matilda, as the surprise and shock would be too great for her; this caused madame Maferini to wish so much to see Alfred, which was before mentioned; he did not, however, arrive till her dissolution.

CHAPTER XII.

EMBARRASSMENT.

Reason, the power
To guess at right and wrong, the twinkling lamp
Of wand'ring life, that winks and wakes by turns,
Feeling the follower, betwixt shade and shining.

CONGREVE.

“FORTITUDE is one of the noblest virtues appertaining to human nature, and stamps upon those who possess it, an unfading lustre, which does honour to the name of man. He who labours under the lash of adversity, and bears up against misfortunes with a pious resignation, must be pleasing to the Supreme Being, while his conduct is universally admired by his fellow-creatures.”

VOL. I.

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This

This was Alfred's argument to his sister, as he tenderly conjured her to moderate her grief, and look upon him not only as a brother, but as a guardian and protector.

They both had just entered their twentieth year ;—Alfred was in his person handsome and manly,—Matilda beautiful and delicate :—the former's disposition was generous and noble, his temper rather impetuous ; yet he was always ready to forgive ; there was, however, a kind of haughty pride in his character, which would sometimes cast a shade over his other virtues.

Matilda was amiable in the highest degree ;—to give a description of her qualifications, would be needless, when we say she was every thing a fond and tender parent could wish her to be.—It was not till just before they retired to rest,

rest, that Matilda recollected the paper her mother had wrote on; she took it from the escritoire, and gave it to her brother, who wished to read it alone, and promised to inform his sister of the contents the next morning.—As soon as he entered his chamber, he eagerly opened it, and read the almost illegible words of his dying mother:

“ TO ALFRED MASERINI.

“ BEFORE I depart from this state of mortality, and am numbered with the dead, I would wish to inform you, my dear son, of a circumstance that lies heavy at my heart.—The pains of death encompass me—yet, I will, if possible, acquaint you, your father died not in the manner you were always taught to believe:—he entered Grasville Abbey with an intent to search the building,

and from that fatal period was never heard of more.—Heaven forgive me, if I judge wrongfully, or condemn the innocent! but though I have never communicated my suspicions to any one, yet I have the strongest reasons to suppose the chief person concerned in this horrid affair was ——”

Madame Maferini had wrote so far, when she dropped her pen, and expired.

Alfred was almost petrified with astonishment and horror; the fatal name, so near being known, was not yet revealed: his mother's senses might at the time be deranged; but this idea entirely vanished, when he considered how much she had wished to see him, on account of relating a circumstance she chose to communicate to no other person.—He resolved for the present to conceal this from his sister; she had already suf-

suffered enough by her mother's death : to inform her, therefore, of the contents of the writing, would only occasion new sorrow and distress.

The next morning, Matilda eagerly inquired the purport of her mother's letter:—she was shocked to see him look so ill, but naturally supposed he had not rested well.—Alfred told her it was a memorandum, relative to her fortune, and other matters ; but she observed in him an uncommon agitation the whole evening, yet forbore to inquire further, though she was certain there was some disagreeable secret he did not choose to divulge.

Alfred gave orders for his mother's funeral, and had her handsomely interred.—He then consulted with his sister in what manner she meant to proceed with the small sum she was now pos-

ferred of.—Madame Maferini had equally divided her fortune between them, but always particularly recommended Matilda to her brother's care; he therefore generously determined to add half of his to his sister's income, but first wished to settle her in some genteel situation before he returned to his regiment.

Alfred, after some persuasions, promised Matilda he would write to the marquis of ****, their grandfather, to inform him of his daughter's death, and her situation.—She considered, as lady Eleanor had been dead some time, and his hopes concerning her marriage entirely at an end, that he might receive her with some degree of tenderness, though he never would look upon their mother.

The young soldier felt himself hurt
to

to write a letter of supplication to a man who had behaved so inhumanly to his own daughter, and flightingly to himself and sister;—however, the idea of Matilda's welfare quenched those sparks of pride, which had before kindled in his bosom.

About a week after madame Maserini's funeral, he sent the following letter, in which might be observed a kind of inward disdain, not likely to move or gain upon the feelings of a man so utterly void of sensibility as the marquis.

From ALFRED MASERINI, to the
MARQUIS of ****.

“ MY LORD,

“ IMPRESSED with the idea that natural propriety as well as common respect commands me to acquaint you with the death of my mother, I have

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taken

taken the liberty to trouble your lordship with a letter, under the sanction of communicating that information : although the dissolution of a daughter whom you have never seen, nor perhaps heard of for many years, may signify but little to your lordship's feelings, and the knowledge of it appear frivolous and impertinent, when conveyed by the hand-writing of her son.

“ But, if possible, my lord, a more forcible reason urged me to intrude on your patience ; it is to supplicate a small share of that favour and protection for my sister Matilda Maferini, which her mother was so unfortunate as never to receive.—Your lordship must naturally suppose my station in life prevents me from affording her that attention so necessary at her present age and situation ; the service of my country will, in a very short time, call me to Flanders ; otherwise

wife I should glory to make it known to your lordship and the world, that I could prove myself her guardian and protector, without remaining under an obligation to either relations or friends.

“ Your lordship, except myself, is the nearest relation she has ; it is, therefore, from you she hopes to find that countenance which will prevent her being looked on with contempt, and consequently, preserve her from temptations and insults ; for, when parted from her brother, deserted by her other relations, and forsaken by those who in the time of prosperity and affluence called themselves her friends, your lordship must consider she will stand a fit object of prey for wretches whose whole life is dedicated to the seduction of virtue, and the ruin of female innocence.—The idea, my lord, almost drives me to madness ; yet a horrid

thought will sometimes intrude, that she may, more through necessity than inclination, prove a disgrace to her family, and an everlasting curse to my happiness. Were such a suspicion by any means well grounded, or even if I had not the most perfect confidence in her virtue and honour, I should bless that hand which would strike her to the heart, and enjoy the moment when I beheld her at my feet a breathless corpse.

“ The annuity left her by her mother, added to that part of my income which I mean to make over to her, will support her in such a manner that she will be no disgrace to your lordship. I only wish to obtain for her permission to reside with you ; her accomplishments, manners, and behaviour, are such as no nobleman need be ashamed of : and permit me to say, my lord, her natural goodness of heart, and gratitude
for

for your protection, will make her a comfort to your declining years.

“ I hope your lordship will take the purport of this letter into consideration ; and that your lordship’s opinion may coincide with the supplication I have made for my sister, is the sincere wish of

“ My lord,

“ Your lordship’s obedient nephew,
ALFRED MASERINI.”

“ Paris.”

This letter was dispatched as soon as possible, and the messenger ordered to wait for an answer. He returned the next day, and delivered Alfred a small packet sealed up.—Matilda’s heart beat high with expectation ; she eagerly watched her brother’s looks while he read a few words which were written

on the outside paper; but soon observed by his countenance there was nothing he hoped for from the marquis.—She faintly asked what were the contents.—“Short and explicit!” he answered, while pride and contempt were visible in his features.—“Read (said he), and judge of it yourself, Matilda.”—He threw it on the table; she, trembling, took it up, and read the following words:

“TO ALFRED MASERINI.

“THE marquis detested your mother;—he has also the same hatred against her children; your childish and romantic petition was read;—the violent passion it caused in him, has brought on a fever:—his orders were, that this note should be written and sent to you by

“FATHER LAURENCE.”

“But

“ But what letter was that,” asked Matilda, “ which was inclosed in this paper ?”

Alfred showed it her ; it was his own letter returned ; they had heard that a priest was the constant companion of the marquis ; and that it was supposed he would stand a chance for some part of his patron’s wealth ; but the messenger informed them that father Laurence entirely lived at the castle, and that the marquis had been heard to say, several times, he should leave him the whole of his fortune.

The only person they now had to apply to, was a gentleman in England, a distant relation of their mother’s : he had been sent over to this country by an uncle, on affairs relative to the family. The old gentleman died while he was in London, and left him a small fortune :
after

after this event, he determined to settle in the city, and commenced business in the liquor trade :—he first kept wine-vaults, from that rose a step higher, and was called a wine-merchant : in this line he accumulated a considerable deal of money by importing foreign goods to this country.—To add to his good fortune he one year received a prize of ten thousand pounds from the lottery ; and in about two years after married an heiress whose fortune amounted to three times that sum.

The friends of the lady were at first so displeased with the union, that for some months no notice was taken of her ; but time soon brought about a reconciliation ;—they determined to make the best of her husband, that he might not in his present situation in life disgrace their name and family ; his wife was a woman of fashion, and
had

had to her name the additional title of lady : they therefore found means to get their new relation knighted ; and he now was distinguished by the appellation of sir Peter Peviquil. His brother-in-law died about two years after their marriage, and having no family, left his sister an income of six hundred a year ; they now thought proper to quit business entirely, and reside at the court end of the town ; their manner of living was, according to lady Peviquil's wishes, in the first style and taste : they were noted for giving the most superb and elegant entertainments of any in London ; in short, sir Peter and lady Peviquil were allowed to be the first fashionable couple in the great metropolis.

CHAPTER XIII.

MADAME Maferini had received repeated solicitations from her relation, to visit him in London; she, accordingly, a few months after Sifera's death, determined to see England, considering it might dispel the melancholy that event had occasioned her:—the children she committed to the care of a faithful servant, during her stay, which was about two months. Mr. Peviquil had not then quitted business: she received the most polite and friendly attention both from him and his lady, and resided totally at their house while she remained in this country. She always since that time had spoken of them to Alfred and Matilda, as people well worthy

worthy their esteem, and had often regretted their living so far distant as to make their society impossible.

Since his mother's death, Alfred had received a letter of condolence from sir Peter, who had accidentally heard the news from a friend; this letter contained a kind and pressing invitation for them to spend a few months in England; which offer they were now resolved to accept, provided Alfred could obtain leave of absence long enough, and permission to quit his country. This, through interest, he accomplished, on condition he should be ready to return at a short notice.

Matilda, little used to the gaiety of the world, though she had nearly all her life resided in a city renowned for its luxury and dissipation, considered that if she was pleased with sir Peter's family,

family, by paying a small gratuity she could reside with them without any inconvenience.—This was, in some degree, Alfred's opinion; but he was much better acquainted with mankind, and the dangers that attended a fashionable life, to view this scheme in so pleasing a light as his sister.—He well knew the dissipated life of intrigue, and other vices, so closely followed by most of the English circles; he had been necessitated, in some respects, to partake of these follies in Paris, which he knew were daily practised in London; and his soul sickened at the thought of leaving Matilda exposed to such dangers, friendless and unprotected.—Possessed of that nice sense of honour which is supposed to constitute the soldier and the gentleman, it in some respect served to make his life uncomfortable.—Generous to a great degree, he was never so happy as when he could make others so;

so; but a haughty and stubborn pride hurt him when he received an obligation.—Ready to take an affront, and as ready to resent it, he was sometimes disagreeable company; yet his person, behaviour, and character, procured him admittance to the first parties.

Matilda was totally unacquainted with the vices of the great; her mother had only kept up the society of a few friends since her return to France; yet her manners were elegant without affectation; her deportment graceful, yet easy, and her accomplishments by no means inferior to the first ranks of life.—Yet her ideas of the world in general were entirely ill founded; she judged of others by herself, and had so little notion of the villany of mankind, as to be easily deceived by any one under the mask of flattery and dissimulation.

After

After some persuasions of his sister, Alfred determined to answer sir Peter's letter, with an acceptance of his kind invitation; the same day month was fixed for their departure, and that period of time filled up with necessary preparations for their journey.

Matilda was all expectation, yet a deep melancholy still clouded her future prospects; the loss of her mother preyed much on her spirits; and while her eye beamed pleasure at the idea of seeing London and gay life, a watery gem would oft intrude, and dim its lustre, when she considered the distance she should be from the tomb of a parent whom she had so dearly loved, and whose memory she so much revered. Alfred was silent and thoughtful; his spirits were fled; the contents of the paper written by his mother served to perplex and distress him, while his
anxiety

anxiety for the welfare of his sister continually preyed upon his mind. As the time drew nearer for their leaving Paris, he became less pleased with the plan on which they were going to proceed; he had always heard his mother speak highly of the family; but their situation in life at that time was entirely different from the present.—Though in a capital line of business, they neither were considered, nor looked upon themselves, as people of fashion; their manner of living, as he now understood, was one continual scene of gaiety and dissipation. Those reports might be false; and on their being so, he entirely placed his hopes respecting Matilda's making one of their family.

Sir Peter's letter was extremely friendly; to have refused what he so earnestly requested, would not only have

have been impolite behaviour, but would, without doubt, have offended him.— This mode of reasoning, in some degree, lessened his disquietude ; yet he resolved within himself not to leave his sister in England, without being certain her situation was strictly accordant both with propriety and honour.

The day of their departure at length arrived. — Matilda, as they passed through the gates of the city, bid a melancholy adieu to her native country. — The recollection of those happy juvenile hours she had enjoyed with a parent whose tenderness and maternal fondness she never more could experience, added to her ideas of the friendless situation and unprotected condition she would be left in when parted from her brother, entirely overcame that fortitude she had shewn at the beginning of
their

their journey; and almost convulsed with grief she burst into an agony of tears.

Alfred raised his head from a rêverie which he had been in from their first setting off; he conjured his sister to be composed, and once more tenderly assured her of his protection.—A post carriage conveyed them from Paris to Calais; an elderly man attended them, who had lived in the capacity of a servant with their mother, since the death of Edward; he was by birth an Englishman, though he chiefly had resided in France.

They were necessitated to wait some time for the packet-boat; Matilda, therefore, who was much indisposed, retired to take a few hours' rest, while Alfred looked over some papers of his mother's, which were in a small trunk.

Matilda

Matilda had not yet examined it, supposing it to be full of waste papers, which were of no consequence; she only brought it with her to hold a few articles of dress when she arrived in London.

After having removed a few of the upper papers, he discovered a miniature of his mother; it was the same which Edward found in the abbey, and had the identical piece of ribband hanging to the ring, the remaining part of which had seemingly been broken by force, or by a sudden shock.—Alfred looked on the resemblance with attention; he contemplated the features of his departed mother, with a melancholy pleasure, and sighed at the idea that he never more should look on the original.—Close to it was the picture of his father.—Alfred had always been told he was extremely like him, and
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for the first time thought so himself.— Both he and his sister had often seen the miniatures before their mother's illness, and after her death every place was searched for them, but to no purpose; nor had they the least idea of their being placed in this trunk.

Alfred carefully looked over the papers, and found none of them worth notice, till he had nearly emptied them all out upon the table, when a roll of parchment, with the name of Sifera Maferini at the bottom, struck his eye. He immediately perused it, and found it was written by his aunt, about six months before her death.—It contained an account of their misfortunes, from his father's first seeing his mother at the convent, till their return to France, and every minute particular relative to signor Maferini's entrance of Grasville Abbey, and his disappearance.—She

also at one part seemed to suspect his cousin, count D'Ollifont, to be privy to the affair, though he was then in Spain.

Alfred's emotion and astonishment were past description; he burnt with eager desire to see the inside of the abbey; but that would now be impossible, till he should return to France.—He knew not how to revenge the loss of his father, as no proof could be brought to charge any one with the guilt;—yet, according to what he had read, he could not avoid supposing that the count was concerned: nor was there a doubt but his mother also intended to have written the same name.

He carefully placed the manuscript in a private drawer of his own, and determined not to inform his sister of the event, as her spirits were already agitated

tated enough, without any new source for horror or distress.

When she rose, he agreeably surprised her by the discovery of the pictures, and informed her he had looked over the papers in the trunk, and could find none but frivolous fragments of no use or consequence.

They were obliged to remain at the place till the beginning of the next day : they then crossed over to Dover, and slept there that night.—Matilda was yet much indisposed, partly occasioned by sea-sickness.—The next evening, after a fatiguing day of post-travelling, they found themselves at a principal inn at London.

CHAPTER XIV.

Would you rekindle all your ancient fires ?
Extinguish first your modern vain desires :
Still it is yours, your glories to retrieve ;
Lop but the branches, and the tree shall live :
With these erect a pile for sacrifice ;
And in the midst throw all your cards and dice !

WHEN the soul is totally absorbed in melancholy reflections on past misfortunes, we are too apt to encourage oppressive ideas, by taking a retrospect of the calamities that may attend futurity.

These ideas sink our spirits under new horrors and distress ; imagination presents to the fancy troubles and sorrows we are never likely to experience.

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To be too confident of our success and abilities at the first out-set in life, naturally leads to extravagance and neglect; we are disappointed at our ambition not being gratified so early as we expected, and consequently sicken of that employment which occasions our mortification and chagrin.—Yet diffidence and timidity are far worse companions to struggle with through the rugged path of life; we continually stumble on dangers and vexations in our hazardous voyage; while they chiefly contribute to multiply adversity, and paint the events that may succeed, worse than those we have already suffered.

Fortitude forsakes the breast which is governed by terror and self-interest; happiness is no more, the sun-shine of hope is eclipsed by the heavy cloud of despair, and we sink into that misery,

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which,

which, through courage and exertion, we might have overcome with honour and respect.

Matilda did not totally despair: and Alfred, by conversations of this nature, strove to dispel that melancholy which was settled on her features during the latter part of their journey.—It was entirely through her persuasion that her brother undertook the affair; she was now sorry she had biased his opinion; for she even regretted leaving Paris; and the nearer she arrived to London, her pleasure in seeing it gradually declined.

Reflection had in a great degree lessened those expectations she supposed would be gratified when she entered this city; and the romantic ideas she had formed of remaining with sir Peter's family in England, seemed now to have
many

many obstacles which she never before thought of.

It was about six o'clock in a wet uncomfortable evening of February, when they arrived at the inn.—After some little time the chief part of their baggage was put into a hackney coach, and Leonard, who was tolerably well acquainted with London, dispatched in it to Grosvenor-square, with a polite message, saying his master and miss Maferini would pay their respects in person, in less than two hours.

Alfred and Matilda, having ordered coffee, remained till near eight; during which time they made some little alteration in their dress.—They then stepped into a hack, and ordered it also to drive to Sir Peter Peviquil's, in Grosvenor-square.

Neither of them was under any embarrassment concerning the English language, as they both had been used to converse in it from their childhood, and pronounced it nearly as well as their own language.

On their arrival at the place to which they had ordered the coachman to drive, the square was full of carriages; nor did they observe more than one hackney-coach in the whole train:—they stopped close to it, unable to proceed any farther for the crowd.—Alfred looked out to see if there was any probability of their getting nearer to sir Peter's house, which he was informed was on the opposite side of the square; when, to his inexpressible surprise, by the light of a footman's flambeau, who passed at the same time, he beheld Leonard in the coach he had before

fore noticed, seated with the baggage in the same state as when he set out from the inn.

The man at the same moment recognised his master, and acquainted him that he found, from his first entrance into the square, it would be impossible for him to get to the door of sir Peter's house, there being a grand entertainment there in honour of his daughter's birth-day; and that the gentlemen's carriages would not permit a common hack to draw up:—he was, therefore, afraid to go himself in search of it, on account of the baggage he must have left behind; but he said he had sent several messages to the servants concerning his situation, but that he had received no answer.

Alfred was vexed, yet he could not help smiling at the fellow's recital: they

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were

were now in a line of carriages leading to the house: he knew it would be some time before they could arrive there; yet to walk would be almost impossible, on account of his sister, as the rain poured down with uncommon violence.—They therefore determined to wait till the coach, in due course, should draw up to the door; in about twenty minutes they found themselves before the entrance of sir Peter's mansion.

The coachman, by Alfred's order, knocked a single rap:—a footman in a handsome livery appeared; he asked in a surly manner, what was wanted? the man answered, a gentleman in a hackney coach wanted to see sir Peter Peviquil.

The footman replied with some insolence, "his master could not then be
spoke

spoke with," and immediately shut the door.

Alfred's pride (who overheard this conversation), took fire;—he directly gave the coachman a card, and ordered him to knock a double rap at the door, and desire the servant to deliver it to sir Peter.

The man at first hesitated, but at last complied with the request.—In a short time he returned with a polite message from sir Peter, requesting they would make his house their home; and that he himself would, if possible, welcome them to England in less than an hour.

The servant was now all civility; both the coaches were discharged, and Leonard saw the baggage safe in the house, while Alfred and Matilda were con-

ducted by fir Peter's valet through a noble hall, elegantly adorned with lamps, and lined with servants in waiting, to a handsome parlour.—The house seemed in total confusion! and the number of fashionable company and nobility that was there, was evident from their names being announced, as they ascended the great stairs leading to the rooms of reception.

Sir Peter's genteel conduct in some degree compensated for the impertinence of his porter, and banished that anger from Alfred's bosom, which the insolence of the latter had occasioned. In about two hours the gentleman himself appeared: he tenderly embraced them both, and expressed, with the most pleasing affability, his happiness in seeing them in London: he regretted (he said) the etiquette which prevented
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ed lady Peviquil and his daughter from leaving the rooms above, to perform the duties of hospitality and politeness; but that he was sure they would impatiently wait for the breakfast hour in the morning, to be introduced to their amiable relations.

He, however, begged they would make themselves happy! order supper, and retire to rest at what time they thought proper, as chambers were prepared for them, and also proper accommodation for their servant.—He then took his leave for the rest of the evening, and left the young travellers highly delighted with his courteous behaviour.

They made but a short repast, though the table was spread with dainties elegantly served up; about twelve they desired to be conducted to their different

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ent apartments ; but the noise of the house, and their own reflections, prevented either of them from enjoying repose.

CHAPTER XV.

THE noise and confusion in the house did not seem over before four in the morning;—Matilda heard the doors fastened half an hour after;—and about five, silence reigned through every part.

She once more strove to drive away uncomfortable reflections, and fell into a disturbed slumber: distressing dreams harassed her imagination with horrid visions; the figure of her mother was constantly before her eyes, reproaching her for entering a house remarkable for gaiety and dissipation.

She awoke about ten, but little refreshed,

freshed, and hurried up for fear of detaining the breakfast-table; but to her great surprise, as she descended the stair-case, a servant was but just opening the windows. She inquired at what hour the family assembled in the breakfast parlour; the man answered, generally at half past eleven, sometimes twelve.

Alfred had been up near an hour, and was equally astonished with his sister, at the servant's intelligence:—he proposed a walk round the square, till the sitting-rooms were in order; which she gladly accepted.

Matilda seized the opportunity to ask her brother, considering the little they had seen, how he liked their situation;—and also his opinion of sir Peter.

Alfred

Alfred replied, from the short time he had been in company of sir Peter Peviquil, he seemed to be a man who would interest any one in his favour, even at a first interview.

“ But, Matilda,” said he, “ we must not depend too much on the smooth, well-timed speeches of a man of fashion: for though both he and the family in general were friendly and agreeable in every respect, yet their manner of living would kill you.—Leonard informed me last night, that he had learnt from the servants, the family hardly ever retired to rest before three or four in the morning;—that they were never without company when at home, and that their rooms are filled with the first people of distinction and fashion.—Even if their dissipation did not affect your health, you certainly must consider how improper a situation
this

this is, for a young woman whose fortune is barely competent to support her.

Matilda acquiesced with his observation, yet was hurt at the idea of her own insignificance.

In about an hour they returned to the house;—preparations were made for breakfast, but the family had not assembled.

Sir Peter, in a short time, entered the room, and introduced his lady, daughter, and son.

Lady Peviquil was, in person, tall and elegant, her deportment was graceful, and in her manner she was the woman of fashion;—yet a haughty pride in her disposition was visible, even to a common beholder, at first sight; and

and cast a deep shade over those accomplishments which showed her a lady of rank.—Miss Peviquil had the day before entered her nineteenth year; she was tall, genteel, lively, and good tempered; in the ornamental part of education she was accomplished, but, like her mother, a total stranger to domestic duties.—In conversation, she was gay and witty, and accounted, by the connoisseurs of fashionable manners, a tolerably smart pretty girl.

Henry Peviquil was one-and-twenty; entirely free from pride, handsome in his person, and pleasing in his behaviour and address; extremely dissipated, and fond of being thought so.

He had received the education of a gentleman, and was left a fortune of six hundred a year by an uncle of his mother's.—He was shortly expected to
set

set out on the grand tour, and only waited till a proper companion could be obtained.

The young travellers were treated in the most friendly manner by sir Peter.—Lady Peviquil, her daughter, and Matilda, took an airing in the coach; while Henry drove his new friend round Hyde Park in his curricule.

Cards were delivered out to form a select party of friends in the evening, who were to be introduced to the young foreigners.

At their return, they dressed for dinner, which was served up by candle-light.—The select party at night consisted of about thirty persons of fashion and distinction.—The formal introduction to them all by her ladyship, was tiresome and disagreeable to Matilda;
yet

yet she returned the compliments of each individual with a grace which did honour even to the drawing-room of sir Peter Peviquil.

Alfred had been used to the gaieties of Paris, and being as well versed as his sister in the English language, found himself under no embarrassment in a London company.

The next day he declared his intention of taking lodgings for himself and servant; this was strongly opposed by sir Peter; but he persisted in his resolution, and begged the assistance of Mr. Peviquil in the undertaking.—Henry with his usual good-nature, eagerly complied with the request, and declared, he knew of handsome apartments that were to be let in Bond-street; which was no great distance from Grosvenor-square, and made it the more agreeable,

as sir Peter requested he would spend as much of his time as possible with him and his family.

The gentlemen viewed the rooms that morning, while the ladies attended a music-meeting.—Alfred approved much of their situation and convenience; he immediately engaged them, and was to take possession the next day.

Henry Peviquil was engaged for the beginning of the evening, and sir Peter rather indisposed with a cold; it was therefore agreed that Alfred should escort her ladyship, his sister, and miss Peviquil to the theatre; and a stage-box was accordingly retained for them.

Matilda was delighted with the tragedy, which was Hamlet:—although her knowledge of the language would
not

not permit her to understand every sentence, yet she could perfectly make out the plot and management of the piece; and was charmed with the ingenuity of the author.—Her ladyship paid more attention to the company than to the stage; while her daughter was entirely taken up in observing Alfred, whose attention was fixed on a lady in the opposite box.—Her figure and manner charmed him; in short, the latter part of the evening he quite neglected the performance, in the notice he took of the fair incognita.

At the close of the entertainment, Alfred inquired of lady Peviquil the name of the young lady opposite them: her ladyship answered, “It was lady Caroline Albourn, daughter of lord Albourn, a nobleman renowned for his large fortune and good character; and, lady Caroline,” continued her ladyship,
“is

“ is allowed to be a beautiful and accomplished young lady.”—“ My ideas, my lady,” returned Alfred, “ perfectly agree, in the former observation, with the opinion of the world.”

“ Lord ! Mr. Maferini,” said miss Peviquil, hurt at the compliment paid to another, “ surely there are as handsome women in the house as lady Caroline Albourn.

“ Pardon me, madam,” replied Alfred, “ all are handsome ; yet some more beautiful than others ; nor can the remark be more fully exemplified, than when lady Caroline or miss Peviquil make their appearance.”

This well-turned compliment entirely stifled the resentment of the lady, and she immediately resumed her usual gaiety and good temper.

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As they crossed the lobby, they were met by Henry Peviquil, who, after helping Alfred to assist the ladies to their coach, stopped him from following.

“ Ladies,” said he, “ I must request you will dispense with the company of your knight-errant from conducting you home, as I arrest him for the remainder of the night.—Therefore, my dear Maserini, take leave of the fair damsels, and follow me.”

Alfred begged to be excused, and desired he would consider there were none but ladies in the coach.

“ Oh !” returned Henry, “ there is a footman behind, who is able to defend twice as many.”

“ I do not take it kind of you,” said
VOL. I. I her

her ladyship, "to force Mr. Maserini from us, if you do not like to attend yourself."

Matilda was anxious her brother should return with them, and miss Pe-viquil afraid of losing the gallant conversation of the young Frenchman: but it availed nothing:—Henry, after begging all their pardons, and declaring he would make it up with them in the morning, closed the coach door, and ordered the coachman to drive home.

He then laid hold of Alfred's arm, and told him he must now introduce him to a set of friends, whose names he did not choose to mention before the ladies: "for though," said he, "I am not a gamester myself, yet I spend some of my time in the fashionable company of those who love play."

Alfred

Alfred was rather displeased at his impetuous behaviour; but considered it as the warmth of his friendship; and the consequence of his having partaken that evening rather too freely of the bottle.

They arrived, after some time, at a well-known house in St. James's-street, and were conducted to the room of fashionable company.

Alfred was struck with their appearance: — the horrid countenances of some, whom fortune had not so favoured that evening,—the intoxicated joy of others who had emptied the pockets of their friends,—and the extreme agitation of the whole assembly, whose expectations were all on the table, made it a scene of disagreeable reflection to those who had never been addicted to that destructive vice.

Alfred plainly perceived his companion was well known to them; he was asked to play, but refused; and Alfred likewise begged to remain out, but was obliged to bet, that he might not seem particular, as all those who did not sit down, laid on the success of each player:—but the stakes were not large at their part of the room.

In about an hour a table was vacant, and a party accordingly mustered to fill it. Alfred was over persuaded, and sat down with Henry Peviquil, who proposed no high play:—this was unanimously agreed upon, and a small sum settled, to the satisfaction of every person.—They broke up in about three hours, and Alfred found himself a winner of about a guinea.—He was complimented on his judgment of the game, and invited for the next evening. — Henry and Alfred both returned to Grosvenor-square,

square, and arrived there about four in the morning.

When the family met the next day, Henry Peviquil made his peace with the ladies;—but he found more difficulty in the undertaking than he expected:—his mother and sister were seriously offended; nor could Matilda forgive him, though she was necessitated to say to the contrary.

Alfred was far from being displeased with the company he had seen; struck as he was at first with their appearance, the latter part of the time they seemed more agreeable to him; and their ready acquiescence to play for a small sum, confirmed him in the mistaken opinion that they were not a common class of gamblers.—He was not averse to meet them the following evening, nor did morning reflection by any means alter

his ideas concerning the transactions of the night.

Lady Peviquil informed them, she had summoned a numerous company for that evening, "and among the rest," added her ladyship, with a smile, which was well understood, "I expect lord Albourn and his daughter."

Alfred was struck with astonishment—he had engaged himself to the party in [St. James's-street; but this obstacle to his wishes he determined to surmount, by begging Henry Peviquil to make his excuse, as he could not possibly be guilty of such impolite behaviour, as to absent himself from lady Peviquil's drawing-room, when she herself requested his company.—But he might have saved himself the trouble, as Henry intended to spend the fore-part of the evening in Grosvenor-square; yet he

he insisted on Alfred's accompanying him there, after the rooms closed, which, he supposed, would not be very late.

CHAPTER XVI.

MATILDA took more pains than usual at the toilet:—she understood from lady Peviquil that numbers of fashionable people were to be there; she therefore considered it would be a compliment to her ladyship to make some few additions to her dress, which consisted of white satin.—She wore the picture of her father suspended on her bosom, by a gold cross and chain; her appearance was beautiful, and she received no small compliments from sir Peter and his son. — Lady Peviquil and her daughter were rather cool in their behaviour, and seemed envious of her superior beauty and elegance.

The

The rooms began to fill at nine o'clock, and many persons of distinction were announced: among the rest the Spanish ambassador was ushered in, and begged to introduce to sir Peter and his lady, an intimate friend, who had accompanied him from Spain to England. The gentleman was a foreigner of note, rather in the decline of life; yet his person was handsome, and his manners elegant and accomplished:—his excellency had not yet been made known to Alfred or Matilda; sir Peter therefore introduced them both at one time, the first as the Spanish ambassador, the second as count D'Ollifont.

Alfred was struck motionless with horror and surprise; the supposed murderer of his father stood before him:—nor was the count's embarrassment less; for before sir Peter could mention the name of Maserini, he cast his eye on

the picture of their father; his countenance immediately turned pale, and he showed the greatest emotion.

Matilda, though she had never heard her mother speak highly of the count, received him with politeness; but Alfred, after a few cold compliments, joined lord Albourn and his daughter at another part of the room.

The behaviour of both gentlemen was generally noticed:—but each excused himself, by saying it was surprise at the sudden introduction to a relation almost unknown.

The count seemed struck with Matilda's figure and address; he chiefly attended her the whole evening; which caused great envy and uneasiness in the breasts of her fair friends; among these was miss Peviquil, who was extremely
hurt

hurt at being forsaken by Alfred Maserini, and more so at receiving such a few compliments from the ambassador and his friend.

Alfred dedicated the whole evening to lady Caroline, nor did she seem by any means displeased at the attention paid her by the young Frenchman; her father gave him a general invitation to Soho-square, as the friend and relation of sir Peter Peviquil.

The agreeable conversation he had with the young lady, in some measure made up for the surprise, horror, and dissatisfaction he felt at an introduction to the count.

The attention paid Matilda by her relation did not pass unnoticed by her brother; he determined next day to hint to his sister his dislike of him, without

entering into a particular detail of circumstances, which would only distress and perplex her.

The rooms began to thin about twelve ; and in a little time after, lord Albourn and his daughter took their leave ; Alfred conducted the latter to her carriage, then joined Henry Peviquil, and proceeded to St. James's-street.

The same company was assembled with some additions ; and one of the strangers was at the table where Henry and his friend were placed ; they played higher than the night before, and Alfred, at the breaking up of the party about half past four in the morning, found himself a loser of thirty pounds ; he paid the money without the least chagrin, and was promised his revenge the next evening.—Henry Peviquil
was

was also declared a debtor to the table, of twenty guineas.—They parted a little way from the house,—the latter for Grosvenor-square,—the former for his new lodgings in Bond-street.

Matilda had taken notice of her brother at his introduction to the count, nor could she conceive a reason for his abrupt behaviour; her surprise, however, was greatly heightened at the slighting manner in which he spoke of him, when they were alone the following day.—In vain she asked his meaning for the dislike he shewed; the more they conversed on the subject, his conversation appeared the more strange and intricate.—His ideas also seemed entirely changed concerning their residence in London; her fears of dissipation and bad hours he laughed at; declared himself pleased with sir Peter's family;

family ; and would not permit her to mention a wish of leaving it.

Alfred was a constant attendant at Lord Albourn's, the fore part of the day ; the latter he generally spent in the gay family of sir Peter ; and the night and beginning of the morning at a gaming table : he was now universally known as a man of fashion, and his name familiar in the first circles, as the dissipated, lively, and handsome Frenchman.

His sister saw, with concern, the effects of their London journey ; she could plainly observe her brother's fortune would be soon exhausted, in the manner he lived ;—his character, as a gambler, was constantly made free with, and his midnight exploits and quarrels commonly mentioned in general conversations.

fations.—Her own situation was also particularly disagreeable.—Harassed by the assiduities of the count and many other admirers, she was continually plagued with their importunities and flattery.—Lady Peviquil had entirely thrown off the few amiable qualities she seemed to possess; and being further acquainted with her circumstances and friendless situation, she treated her little better than a dependent on her bounty.

Miss Peviquil hated her for her beauty, and was hardly civil; in vain Matilda begged her brother to leave England, and return to France; he laughed at her complaints; she requested him only to conduct her there, and she would immediately place herself in a convent, and cause him no further trouble:—but her solicitations were vain; the destructive vice of gaming had already

ready taken possession of him: every obstacle, difficulty, and interest, vanished before it; even the welfare of his sister, the honour of his family, the treatment of his father, and the desire he had to see Grasville Abbey, were thought of no more, when the gaming-table appeared; lady Caroline was almost forgot; in short, every sentiment of fortitude, courage, and humanity, with other virtues which stamped on him the name of a gentleman and a soldier, were almost swallowed up in a cursed infatuation for a fashionable vice.

Sir Peter, who was entirely governed by his lady, paid scarcely any attention to his fair relation:—the whole family treated her with the utmost indifference, except Henry Peviquil:—his gallantry, like that of the count, was entirely disgusting; and the most villanous views appeared

appeared under the mask of friendly concern and pity for her situation; he would often hint his knowledge of her circumstances, and the extravagance of her brother, which extravagance he first introduced him to:—his discourse would then turn into violent protestations of his regard for her, and admiration of her beauty and accomplishments.

Before Alfred, he shewed no further signs of particularity in his behaviour than what common politeness required. Affairs were in this state, when one evening, at a grand ball given by lady Peviquil, a stranger was introduced under the name of Milverne, an only son of a lord of that name: he was just arrived from Italy, where he had attended his father, who was in a declining state of health:—his elegant figure and agreeable manners were universally noticed:

ticed:—he was requested to open the entertainment with a minuet, and a lady was also fixed on for that purpose; but the latter being rather indisposed, declined the ceremony and fatigue attending on single dancing: the young gentleman was therefore obliged to take another partner, and he immediately requested the hand of Matilda: praises were whispered through every part of the room, at the elegance and grace of the young performers; nor did Mr. Milverne's attention end here; he continued among the crowd of her admirers the whole evening, and greatly interrupted the soft speeches of the count.

Alfred danced with lady Caroline; but he was by no means so great a favourite with his lordship as at their first interviews; nor did he seem pleased with his daughter's resigning her hand
to

to him as a partner : lady Caroline herself appeared much attached to him ; and Matilda thought she could perceive, in her eyes and manner, something more than common regard ; yet she never, in the several visits and times she had seen her ladyship, which had brought on an intimacy between the young ladies, received the least information to confirm the opinion her ideas had suggested.

The company broke up about five in the morning ;—Matilda, vexed with the impertinence of the count and Henry Peviquil, yet pleased with the conversation of Mr. Milverne :—her brother equally hurt at the cool manner and treatment of Lord Albourn, but happy in finding his lordship's sentiments against him were not imbibed by his fair daughter.

CHAPTER XVII.

REFLECTION.

The thoughts of glory past, the present shame,
A thousand griefs shall waken at the name.

POPE'S Homer.

THERE are a number of vicious and licentious vices, which will so far triumph over human nature, as to seduce those from a track of virtue, that for years have been respected as valuable members of society.—Yet we see few but what at some time or other, feel the most severe pangs from remorse of conscience, and a retrospect of the fair character they once held in the world: contrasted with the scorn and slighting treatment they are necessitated to suffer from many, who, at an early
part

part of life would have been proud of their esteem, yet have lived to behold their superiors reduced to the lowest state of penury and distress.

Reflection is never more poignant than when happy scenes, once enjoyed, are compared with the misery of a present state,—which misery has been occasioned by neglect, indolence, or extravagance.—The most abandoned experience moments, when acute feelings assail them with redoubled force; yet these feelings in some measure serve only to harden them in their crimes, and drive them to acts of desperation.—On others they take different effect; repentance, and shame for what is past, urge them to amend for the future; give them strength and inclination to disentangle themselves from those embarrassments they are plunged into,
and

and make them more cautious and wary through the remainder of life.

Alfred, at serious intervals, was nearly distracted with the idea of his own conduct; yet he had no power to reform: those resolutions of amendment, made in a morning, were thought of no more when the gambling hour approached; his care for the welfare of his sister would sometimes make him thoughtful in the midst of dissipation, but he was laughed at by his gay companions, and suffered to be melancholy no more.

His pride was hurt at the behaviour of lord Albourn; yet he knew he merited it; and his love for lady Caroline still drew him to a house where he was received by its owner with little cordiality and politeness.

Nor

Nor did count D'Ollifont's attention to his sister altogether pass his notice :— his natural jealousy made him believe she really liked his addressees, and he instantly mistook common civility for returned affection.

His hatred against the count was the same, yet he had seldom time to think of it :—but he now resolved to give Matilda her aunt's manuscript, let the uneasiness it might occasion her, be ever so distressing : she was accordingly told, a few days after, that her brother's servant requested to speak with her ; she was glad of this opportunity to see Leonard alone ; having wished much to question him concerning Alfred's manner of living ; and though she felt herself hurt at causing the man to betray his master's affairs, yet she knew it to be an expedient absolutely necessary under their present circumstances.

The

The poor fellow's countenance clearly told all was not right; Matilda was shocked at his appearance; she had seen him but once since he moved with his master to Bond-street; and the visible change in his person plainly discovered the effects of irregular hours.

He delivered to her the paper sealed up;—and, after inquiring her health, and telling her he was sorry he had troubled her, but that he was ordered to deliver it into her own hands, he would have departed:—Matilda stopped him, and begged to know if he had been ill.

The tear almost started from his eyes. —“No, madam, I thank you,”—was all he could answer.

“For heaven's sake, Leonard,” continued Matilda, deeply affected with this
this

this mark of his attachment, “ tell me from whence this uneasiness proceeds ; I am sure you are not well :—perhaps my brother’s house does not suit your constitution.

Leonard seemed hurt that he had gone so far, and, after stammering an excuse, would again have withdrawn ; but she insisted on his sitting down, and ordered some refreshment :—that was however useless ; his appetite was gone, and he seemed in the last stage of consumption.—She then implored him by the love he bore her family, and by the regard he had for his master and herself, to inform her of every circumstance relative to his affairs :—“ for I am certain,” continued Matilda, “ they are in a disagreeable situation ; the expensive manner in which he lives, added to his fondness for play, confirms those reports which have been hinted to me

by many, whom I know to be well acquainted with his proceedings.

The man seemed struck with astonishment at her knowledge of those circumstances he had dreaded to communicate to her ; and confessed, by the appearance and behaviour of his master, the worst might be expected ;—that the hours he kept were unreasonable, and that his manner often shewed him to be distracted. He also told her, he knew he had drawn on monsieur La Mecie several times ; “ in short, my dear lady,” continued Leonard, “ he is quite an altered man ; and he sometimes returns home in a morning, after I have been sitting up for him all night, in such ill temper, that it cuts me to the heart.”

Matilda found herself incapable of bearing this interview any longer with fortitude ;

fortitude; she therefore dismissed the faithful servant, with repeated assurances of her esteem for him, and a request that if any other circumstances should arise concerning her brother, he would immediately repair to Grosvenor-square, and relate them to her. She directly retired to her chamber, and broke open the letter: signora Maserini's manuscript dropped from the cover, on which Alfred had wrote a few lines. He concluded with saying, he could plainly perceive by her manner, she had an attachment for count D'Ollifont, which gave him the greatest uneasiness; and though he had hitherto kept the inclosed from her sight, through motives of tenderness, yet the common force of nature urged him to take every method in his power to prevent her forming a wretched alliance with a villain, the supposed murderer of their father.

The paper fell from her hand, and she fainted in the chair.—Miss Peviquil at that moment opened the door:—she was astonished to see Matilda in a fit, but immediately rang the bell. A servant attended: water and hartshorn were procured, and she recovered in a short time; both papers lay on the floor, but fortunately were not observed by either of the servants or Miss Peviquil, during their attendance on their fair patient; but, at the beginning of her recovery, they were taken up by her own woman, who was going to deliver them to her lady, not thinking Matilda able to take them:—yet her ideas were not so deranged but a recollection of their contents struck her with the impropriety of their being seen by the family; she therefore exerted her utmost strength, and, though not able to speak, snatched them from the girl's hand,

hand, and hurried them into her pocket with the utmost precipitation.

Miss Peviquil felt herself hurt at the disappointment her curiosity suffered by not seeing the letters which had caused such violent emotion in her friend: she directly suspected it to be a love affair, and maliciously determined to be revenged on her, by relating the whole story in company:—with these charitable resolutions she took leave, requesting to see her in the drawing-room, as Mr. Milverne and some other gentlemen had paid them a morning visit, and were inquiring after her health.—Matilda returned her many thanks for her care and attention, and promised to join them in a few minutes.

Mr. Milverne had been a constant attendant at sir Peter's, since his first

introduction at the ball:—his particular politeness to Matilda plainly told she was the chief magnet which drew him to the house; and though lady Peviquil was not by any means pleased with this information, which was first hinted to her by her daughter, yet she knew not how to dismiss from her parties a young gentleman of high birth, noble character, and elegant accomplishments.—Their only hope was that he could not possibly entertain any serious ideas of an honourable connection, without his father's consent;—which consent they were partly certain would never be granted, on account of the old gentleman's avaricious disposition.

Every one expressed their concern at the languid appearance of Matilda, when she entered the room:—she excused

cused herself by her having been rather indisposed that morning.

“ Pardon me, miss Maserini,” returned Mr. Milverne, “ your health seems on the decline : and though I do not mean to alarm you, yet I think the country absolutely necessary to restore that bloom to your countenance, which, through fine feelings, has too often vanished at the entrance of a sympathetic tear occasioned by a tale of woe, or a recital of the misfortunes of others.

Both lady Peviquil and her daughter smiled with contempt.—Matilda thanked him, and said, she shortly intended to leave England, as she did not find the climate agree with her constitution.

He changed colour instantly;—his surprise and emotion was visible to all.—“To leave England, madam!” he replied.—Having recollected himself, he in a more composed manner asked her, if her resolution to that purpose was not very suddenly taken.

Miss Peviquil considered this would be a fit opportunity to exercise her ill-nature, which was greatly heightened by Mr. Milverne's behaviour to Matilda, on the circumstance of the letter; and immediately answered to that gentleman's question, by significant hints, that it was a disorder in the heart, which was extremely difficult to be cured:—she then, with the utmost irony and malice, related the affair in the most ridiculous terms, and concluded with a request to know the name of her admirer.

Mr.

Mr. Milverne seemed petrified :— Matilda was struck with astonishment at her conversation ; the insulting and malicious wit of miss Peviquil was more than she could support :—nor had she power to utter a word, but burst into a flood of tears. Her brother at that moment was announced, and entered the drawing-room.

The embarrassment of the whole party was general :—the gentlemen, who, except Mr. Milverne, were chiefly strangers, testified their approbation of miss Peviquil's recital by laughing ; but the idea that their mirth had drawn tears from a beautiful young woman, cast a gloom on their countenance, and gave them no very favourable opinion of her whose satirical talents had so much entertained them.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ALFRED Maferini was going to pay the compliments of the morning with more than usual gaiety, when the sight of Matilda, striving to conceal her tears, struck his eyes; her manner and peculiar situation prevented his utterance. Reflection darted on his memory, and his late ill-treatment of her appeared in the most black and villanous colours:—she had been insulted, he could perceive;—friendless and unprotected, she had no one to take her part:—their mother had always recommended Matilda to his care:—how had he fulfilled her request?—by cruel indifference, when she was surrounded with seducers, danger, and
dissipa-

dissipation ;—in short, every part of his behaviour, since their residence in London, presented itself in the most shameful light, and the ideas of his own baseness kept him motionless some time.

The silence was not broken, till he himself, -with the utmost tenderness, asked his sister the cause of her tears.—She found he was hurt ; and the recollection of his former kindness, contrasted with his present conduct, threw her into another agony of weeping.

He immediately turned, and, with the greatest indignation in his looks, asked an explanation of his sister's uneasiness, which he said he supposed was occasioned by some affront she was unable to resent.—“ If so,” continued Alfred, “ I am arrived here in proper time, to
K 6 afford.

afford that protection which by duty I am bound, and by inclination I am most willing to give."

Mr. Milverne was the only gentleman he had any knowledge of in the room; he had noticed that he in general paid particular attention to Matilda; his wild imagination instantly took fire, and whispered him he was the person who should answer for the injury. No sooner had this thought suggested itself, than, in a resolute tone, he insisted on his resolving the question.

Mr. Milverne started from a rêverie, which the late conversation had thrown him into, and, with a manly composure, addressed the distracted Alfred:—
"Most willingly, sir! My carriage is at the door:—if you will favour me with your company round the Park, I will
inform

inform you of the whole affair; and permit me to say, sir, had miss Maserini's brother been always as anxious after her welfare and happiness, there would have been no cause for him to have requested information, or my assistance to have given it."

This just reproach struck the young Frenchman to the heart; he frowned, and they left the room together.

The gentlemen who remained soon after took their leave.—Matilda found herself alone with lady Peviquil and her daughter.—The situation was distressing; but she was soon relieved from it, as both retired to their dressing rooms; the latter making an awkward apology for the unhappiness she had occasioned.

Mr. Milverne in the most friendly
terms

terms informed Alfred of the cruel treatment his sister had received, not only that morning, but at many other times, when he himself had in the same manner been witness to it.—He conjured him to remove her from sir Peter Peviquil's,—reminded him it was a house of dissipation, pride, and luxury,—begged him to consider how dangerous many parts of the company were to a young lady but newly entered into the gaieties of life:—he even hinted his suspicions of Harry Peviquil, and count D' Ollifent.—This name touched Alfred to the soul—he made no answer, but heaved a convulsive sigh.

Mr. Milverne still continued, “ My attention to your sister has, I own, Mr. Maferini, been particular; and I now in your presence avow that I love her—love her to distraction.”

“ Why

“Why not then, fir,” returned Alfred,—“avow it to the world, and openly address her as a man of honour? Not, fir, that I wish for your alliance with her, more than that of any other gentleman;—yet I conceive, when sentiments of love and attachment are declared for a young woman, they sound not with propriety till sanctioned by the open behaviour of an intended husband.”

“And that, fir,” replied Mr. Milverne, “should before now have been exemplified in me, had it not been for a whimsical father whose consent I must, if possible, obtain, for the sake of us both:—if this can be done, I shall be happy to make her my wife, and think myself blessed in the possession of such a treasure.”

Alfred still remained thoughtful;—
reflections

reflections crowded on his mind, and they were almost too much for his senses.—Henry Peviquil, he was now informed, wore a mask of friendship to cover his villany: he had more than once thought ill of him, in his transactions at St. James's-street; yet he was a young man of the first fashion, the son of a person of distinction.—But were these idle pompous ornaments to make amends for the ruin of his sister, the disgrace of his family, the curse of himself?—That sister delivered to his care by a fond mother,—that sister whom he was bound to protect by every tie of blood, love, and honour,—that sister, who herself foresaw danger, and wished to escape it, but was prevented by him,—that sister, whose regard for him he knew to be sincere,—that sister, who had been insulted, yet had no one to defend her, but those who, under motives of charity, would
expect

expect a reward that must at once crush her to the lowest state of human nature!—"Accursed idea!" exclaimed he, in a voice hardly articulate, pulled the check-string, and desired the coachman to stop.

There was a wildness in his look, which alarmed Mr. Milverne. "You are not going to leave me, Mr. Maserini?" said he: "I intended to ask you to take a friendly dinner with me."

"I thank you, sir," returned Alfred, "but must beg to be excused."—

He leaped from the carriage, and darted across the Park towards Piccadilly.

He had arrived at the turnpike-gate when lord Albourn's post chariot drove through. Alfred just perceived his lord-

lordship and his daughter were in it.—The young lady's eyes met his at the same moment;—they both bowed;—but her father did not observe him;—He stopped the servant, who was on horseback paying the toll, and asked if his lordship was going a little excursion from London.

“He is going beyond a little excursion, sir,” replied the man,—“many miles from hence.”

Alfred was struck with astonishment.—“Many miles!” returned he: “why, lady Caroline never informed me of it, although I saw her yesterday.”

“Her ladyship,” said the man, “did not know of it herself two hours before we set off, as it was a sudden whim of lord Albourn's.”

The

The servant seemed in a hurry to overtake the chariot, which had got some little distance;—but Alfred still detained him, to inquire what place they were going to, and when they were to return.

The man answered, “ He really could not tell to what part they were going; but the distance was near two hundred miles from town;—that his lord returned in a week, but that lady Caroline was to be left behind.”—He then spurred his horse, and left his hearer in a state little better than stupefaction.

That lord Albourn had taken his daughter from London, merely to avoid any further intimacy with him, was certain; in short, the occurrences of the morning had overwhelmed him with despair, and he found himself at
his

his own lodgings, before his recollection had reminded him he was going that way. Leonard opened the door; this faithful servant plainly saw the agitation of his spirits.—Alfred strove to disguise his uneasiness, and asked, with some degree of composure, if any person had called since he left home? Leonard answered, “No one, except a mean-looking man, who had left a note for him, which lay in his dressing-room.”—He immediately repaired to it, and read the contents; it was from his taylor, requesting the payment of seventy pounds on the next day,—and, if disappointed, threatened an arrest.—He had, a week before, drawn upon his banker in France for the last three hundred pounds of his fortune;—this would not even pay his debts. Ruin and confusion seemed to encircle him: where was now his pride—his honour—his character as a gentleman and a soldier?

foldier?—Where was his love for his sister?—In what manner was he to make good his word, of adding a part of his fortune to hers?—If he remained in England, disgrace and infamy must surround him;—nor could he fly, but like a mean and beggarly outcast of society, leaving behind him the name of a swindler and a villain. Even in his own country, he must meet the reproaches of those to whom he used to preach lessons of morality, and by example enforced his doctrine. Matilda too,—what was to become of her?—Her fortune would not support her.—“Must she,” said he, “through my faults and follies, sink with me into destruction?—Who is to protect her when I am in jail?—That villain, count D’Ollifont, whom I suspect to be the murderer of my father, may seize on the moment to complete his accursed intentions, and, like the fiend of hell, laugh
at

at those his mischief has hurled head-long into irremediable ruin. It is too much," exclaimed he, running to a part of the room where his sword hung: his despair overcame him;—he drew the blade from the scabbard in a kind of triumph, and uttered, in a voice of phrenzy, "Now I defy them all; even hell itself is better than what may come to-morrow."

The glittering steel trembled in his hand;—his arm was in the very motion to strike his heart, when he found it with-held by a person behind him.—He turned, gasping with convulsive madness; the good old Leonard dropped before him on his knees:—"Merciful father," exclaimed he, "look on him with an eye of pity!—then turning to Alfred with stern aspect,—“is this, sir,” said he, “a time to appear before that God, to whom you have so much

much to answer for, and from whom so little to expect?—Look, sir, in the mirror before you; and consider if your figure is in a proper state for a dying man;—your countenance convulsed and agitated,—your senses in a state of distraction, the sword of your departed father lifted in your hand ready to supersede the power of your God, by putting an end to that existence he gave you, and consequently has alone a right to extinguish.”

The sword dropped from his hand; he sunk into a chair, and felt severely the just reproaches of his servant.—“ I thank you, Leonard,” was all he could say; but he made a motion to be alone. Leonard first secured the weapon, and then left him to meditate on his rashness.

He

He continued for some time in a state of stupid insensibility, but by degrees recovered, and shuddered at the danger he had escaped. His resolution was fixed, never more to game; he swore by the most solemn oath, never to play but for a trifling sum, nor any more to hazard himself at a place where, to his cost, he had experienced the villany of mankind under the mask of friendship and kindness.— With these resolutions Alfred staid at home the remainder of the day, thanked Leonard again for his care, and retired to rest with more composure and satisfaction than he had for months before.

Matilda was overpowered with misfortunes. The account of her father's disappearance, and the suspicion which rested on the count, whom she had before

fore disliked, but now even shuddered at his name, sunk her into new troubles and distress. The insults she had received from miss Peviquil, although they had confirmed her in the idea of possessing the esteem if not the love of Mr. Milverne, entirely settled her determination of leaving England. To accomplish this, she resolved to demand of her brother a small part of her fortune, to carry her over to France; and, immediately on her arrival in that country, to enter a convent, and totally seclude herself from the world, where, young as she was, she could plainly perceive the interested and sordid views of mankind; and sickened at those gaieties of high life she once languished to enjoy.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE MASQUERADE.

To wake the soul by tender strokes of art,
To raise the genius and to mend the heart;
To make mankind in conscious virtue bold,
Live o'er each scene, and be what they behold.

POPE.

WHY was superior strength, fortitude, and courage, given to man?—Why does he naturally inherit these blessings in a greater degree than woman? To protect the weak and defenceless from the gripe and cruelty of the wicked—to give succour to those who in their nature are less capable of bearing up against imposition; and who consequently require that aid, which,
accord-

according to the laws of christianity, he is bound to afford them.

Who is the cause of this horrid downfall to infamy and shame?—Man! he who in the book of nature was ordained to bear the image of the Supreme Being, and created to take on him the godlike office of protector to the female part of the world; yet doth he blunt his feelings against every trait of humanity, and dares destroy that which the Almighty intended he should preserve. Of this description there are many:—but it is to be hoped they are greatly overbalanced by the more noble and generous part of mankind, who equally feel the effects of beauty, yet scorn to gratify their passions by villainous and deliberate schemes of seduction.

Count D'Ollifont was struck with

Matilda's charms, the first evening he was at fir Peter's ; and, in the few minutes' interval between seeing her and being introduced, he settled within his own mind, if possible, to seduce her.

The count was a man who experienced no disturbance from the intrusion of honour, conscience, or feeling : the milk of human kindness was not in any respect concerned, in softening his composition :—the tear of compassion was never seen in his eye, nor could the most dismal tale or even sight of woe, procure from him an accent of pity, or even a sympathetic sigh. The gratification of his passions was his whole concern ; nor did he stop at any thing, to accomplish what his wishes prompted him to possess. He now enjoyed the whole estates and large fortune of count Maserini, grandfather to Alfred and Matilda ; he could therefore

fore well afford to live in the most splendid and elegant manner. On riches he chiefly depended to succeed with the ladies; as he knew his age would almost give him the title of an elderly man.

He had just planned in what manner to make his attack on the beautiful young foreigner, when sir Peter Peviquil, as was before related, led him up, and introduced her under the name of Maferini. The picture of her father plainly confirmed who she was. A sudden horror overcame him; he felt a something strike his heart, which he had heard described as the touch of remorse; he, however, soon recovered, and resumed his natural gaiety and politeness. Yet the behaviour of Alfred did not go unnoticed by him; and it seemed as if he had actually known

those intentions the former had been weighing in his mind five minutes before.

Rest forsook the pillow of the count that night; his ideas of seduction received a check at the mention of the name; yet every circumstance coincided with his wishes, except her brother:—him he feared. Mean and dastardly in his disposition, he was fearful even as a child, and would shrink like a wretched reptile from the just revenge of a man whom he had cringed to with meanness, for the purpose of destroying his happiness, and ruining his family.

He resolved not to be too hasty in the affair, but in every respect to make himself agreeable to Matilda, and wait for an opportunity, when, by some means

means or other, Alfred should be unable to afford that protection his sister would require.

That opportunity was now arrived; the tailor, who had threatened in a letter to arrest him, was the same that made the count's clothes; it was he who first persuaded the man to take that method; supposing, that, not being able in so little a time to procure bail, he must be confined at least for one night, and during that time he could by force (finding that none of his persuasive eloquence had any effect on Matilda) convey her to some secret spot, where he might, unmolested, take advantage of her situation.

This diabolical scheme was, accordingly, with the greatest deliberation, put into execution; and the tailor in-

L. 4 formed

formed the count in the evening, that he had not received his money; the latter then ordered the man, on pain of his displeasure, and entire loss of his custom, not to fail to put his threats in practice. To add greater force to this request, he presented him with a ten pound bank-note, over and above the bill he then paid him; and received a solemn promise in return, that his wishes should be accomplished with the greatest exactness.

Count D'Ollifont then proceeded to fir Peter Peviquil's;—he plainly perceived there had been a misunderstanding between the ladies; but it did not in any respect alter his plan.

He presented the family with tickets for a grand masquerade, which was to be at the Pantheon the next evening,
and

and also begged Mr. Milverne's acceptance of one, who entered the room soon after him.

Matilda at first declined going; but the count would take no refusal.—She seemed particularly cool in her behaviour towards him; but this did not in any respect damp his spirits in the plot he had undertaken.

In the course of conversation, he hinted that he should like Mr. Maserini to be of the party, and pretended he should likewise send him a ticket the following morning.—He gave them to understand the manager of it was patronised by himself, and consequently he should exert his interest as much as possible in his behalf.

The count, Mr. Milverne, and Henry Peviquil, escorted the ladies to a

L 5 concert:

concert:—they returned to supper.—Mr. Milverne seemed unhappy,—Matilda extremely dejected. — She inquired how he left her brother;—he did not wish to relate to her the manner in which Alfred flew from the carriage; but turned the conversation by saying, “ He could not persuade him to take a dinner.”—She would have continued, but was interrupted by the count’s asking in what characters they intended to appear. — Matilda and Mr. Milverne resolved to go in dominos; Henry Peviquil declared he should assume the character of Don Quixote; sir Peter, a hermit; her ladyship, a nun; and miss Peviquil, a gipsy. The count said he did not think himself able to support a character, and therefore should follow the example of his fair cousin, as he was pleased to style her, and appear in no particular dress. About one o’clock he took his leave,
and

and promised to be with them the next evening. Mr. Milverne likewise appointed to call in Grosvenor-square at the same hour.

Matilda retired to her chamber, but not to sleep;—she disliked even the sight of count D'Ollifont; yet she had consented to be conducted by him to a masquerade.—It was an entertainment she had much wished to see; but she heard of its being a dangerous scene of amusement.—She however resolved, if possible, to persuade her brother to accompany them, and for once be the cause of spending a dissipated evening: she should then consider herself safe in his presence, and have greater enjoyment of the entertainment.

Alfred Maserini arose in the morning, more composed than he had been

for many weeks ; having already resolved, immediately on receiving the sum he expected from M. Le Mecie, to discharge his debts, and retire with his sister to France.—He sat down to breakfast, again thanked Leonard for his care, and told him of the alteration in his sentiments ; he observed on the table a letter directed to him ; having asked from whom it came, he was informed a man brought it early in the morning, and said it required no answer : — the contents of it were as follow :

“ TO MR. MASERINI.

“ STRANGE as an anonymous letter may seem under the present circumstances, yet I conjure you, for the sake of your own happiness and the honour of your sister, to obey the dictates it contains.

contains. Count D'Ollifont has engaged fir Peter Peviquil's family to a masquerade this evening at the Pantheon; and it is his intention in the course of the night to convey miss Maserini, by treachery, to a house he has provided in the country for his purpose; where he will take every advantage of her situation. He is also determined to deprive her of your protection, by keeping you away; which scheme he has planned with the tailor who sent to you for money yesterday. The man will call this morning, and arrest you if the bill is not discharged.—Be not offended at seeing the inclosed hundred pound bank-note, as you may not immediately be able to procure the sum:—pay him, and, if possible, persuade him to keep the knowledge of it from the count.—I have also sent you a ticket for the masquerade;—fail not to be there;—but by no means discover yourself

yourself to the party, whom you will recognize in the characters of a hermit, a nun, a gipsy, and Don Quixote.— Among them will be three dominos, which are the disguises of your sister, Mr. Milverne, and the count; watch diligently the latter, whom you will observe draw the young lady to a private room, and then by force take her to a carriage that is to wait at the back-door of the building. I leave the rest to you. Fail not to follow minutely this letter, as you value your peace of mind for ever.

“ A FRIEND.”

Alfred's astonishment at reading this extraordinary epistle, may well be conceived. He showed it to Leonard, and asked his advice; the old man begged him to attend to its contents:—“ No one, sir,” said he, “ could have an interest

terest in writing such a letter; and the bank-note fully confirms it to be no idle frolic.—His ideas were the same as his master's, and they determined to execute implicitly the directions given. The receiving of the money hurt him; but it was absolutely necessary to discharge the debt, as he had none of his own, till that he had sent for arrived: he, however, resolved to find out, if possible, the person, and repay him with every acknowledgment, if the suspicions were well grounded.

Alfred determined, in the first place, not to see his sister, and gave Leonard orders, if any of the servants should come from Grosvenor-square, to send word back he was not at home.

About eleven o'clock, the tailor arrived, was introduced, and received his money.—The man was astonished.

Alfred

Alfred insisted on his taking a glass of wine, and made him a present for the trouble he had caused.—He then related to him the scheme which he had heard was to be put in practice by the count and himself.

Surprise, guilt, and consternation, stopped the tailor's utterance:—he believed it must be some supernatural power that had informed him of it. Alfred argued with him for some time, explained the villany of such proceedings, and the ruin that might have ensued. In short, he worked so much on the poor fellow's feelings, that he fell at his feet, asked ten thousand pardons, and begged to know if he could in any respect serve him, to recompense the injury he had intended to commit.

Alfred took him at his word, and
informed

informed him that the only way to make reparation, would be, to go immediately to the count, and say that every circumstance had succeeded to his wishes, for that Mr. Maferini was in close confinement. The man promised to be punctual in the message, and, after again thanking him for his generosity, departed.

As it was expected, a servant called from sir Peter's, to say that Miss Maferini wished much to see her brother. Leonard told him he was just gone out.

Alfred then sent to procure his dress with as much secrecy as possible: it was a plain domino, that he might not be observed.

In the course of the afternoon, the servant from Grosvenor-square arrived
a se-

a second time; but was answered as before, that Mr. Maserini was not yet returned; he left a note from his sister, and desired it might be given him as soon as he came home. Alfred opened it: Matilda informed him how much against her inclination it was to accompany the count to a masquerade; yet she could not decline the invitation without absolute rudeness. She requested her brother would be there, and concluded with saying, she supposed he had also received a ticket.

He resolved to take no notice of the letter, but, as the anonymous epistle desired (the contents of which he had now every reason to believe authentic), to go himself, unknown to every one. He panted for the moment when he should detect the villain in the very act of injustice and cruelty he had long suspected him to be guilty of; and
crush

crush that monster to the earth, who dared attempt the honour of his family.

The wished-for hour of twelve was announced; when, having placed in his pocket a brace of pistols, he threw himself into a hackney-coach, and ordered the coachman to drive to the Pantheon.

CHAPTER XX.

ALFRED ordered the coachman, when he stopped at the front doors in Oxford-road, to drive round and wait for him at the back entrance.

The Pantheon was crowded; the company were numerous and elegant; every one looked happy and pleased with each other.—“ I,” said Alfred, “ am the only person who seem unfociable and alone. Several characters passed, which he knew by their voices; but he could no-where trace those he wished to recognise; when on a sudden a group of bacchanals rushed by him, and among them he observed Don Quixote. Having addressed the figure in a feigned voice, by inquiring after his Dulcinea
del

del Toboso, he immediately received a witty answer from a tongue which plainly confirmed it to be Henry Pe-
viquil.

He now judged the rest of the party must be in the rooms, and accordingly continued his search.

In about a quarter of an hour he perceived the knight join his company; they were dressed exactly as the letter had described, except that he could observe only two dominos, which he found were his sister and the count;—but soon after heard them speak, as if they were surprised at not seeing Mr. Milverne.

At supper the greater part of the company unmasked, and Alfred was confirmed that his conjectures on each of the characters were right.—

He

He still continued disguised, with his eyes fixed on them:—and it gave him pleasure to see Matilda treat the count with the utmost coolness:—but yet he thought he could perceive, in the countenance of the latter, a malicious smile, occasioned by the hope of having her shortly in his power.—These ideas made him redouble his vigilance; and he directly after the repast joined them almost close, but strove as much as possible to escape notice.

Henry Peviquil and his father seemed heated by the wine they had drank;—miss Peviquil was chiefly taken up in gallanting with a gambling friend of her brother's; and her ladyship in paying compliments to her fashionable acquaintance. — Count D'Ollifont attended to none but his fair relation;—and the inattention she received from the others, gave him an opportunity
of

of continuing his politeness.—Alfred remarked a magician who followed also the steps of the count;—his dress was truly conformable to the part he performed, and he held in one hand a wand, the emblem of his power.—This figure gave him some chagrin, and he resolved to address it, by asking him in what manner he made use of his art:—the magician answered, in a voice which he thought he had somewhere heard, “That he punished the guilty, and gave succour to the innocent.—I know you, young man,” said he: “and you are in a noble cause; be cautious how you execute it.”

Alfred was staggered at this reply, but yet thought they might be words of chance, and begged an explanation of the incoherent sentence. The magician said, he would convince him of his knowledge; and immediately wrote
on

on a card the following words.—
“ Your name is Maferini,—your business at this place is to protect the honour of your family in the person of your sister:—the time draws near:—be diligent, and fail not.”

By the time he had read these few words, the magician was gone; and the astonished Alfred stood for some time motionless:—he seemed in a dream, and could hardly believe his senses; yet he supposed this stranger must be the person who had sent him the letter. The count and his sister were nearly out of sight at a different part of the Rotunda, but he quickly made up to them;—their party had entirely dispersed, and Matilda seemed extremely uneasy. The former in vain strove to give her comfort; she could hardly conceal her tears. It was about three o'clock, the time fixed for the
horrid

horrid scheme, when Alfred observed the count draw his sister to another room, under the idea of seeking their friends.—He followed, and heard him inform her that he had been just told they waited for them in their carriages at the back entrance. He led her to the door; that being a place for chairs only, there were no coaches near.—The count conducted Matilda down the street, and turned into a part where there was a chariot and one hackney coach waiting at a little distance.

Matilda, seeing no one in the carriage, refused to enter it: the count entreated, but she still continued obstinate, and seemed extremely alarmed. They were not within hearing of any person but the hackney coachman and another man who stood with him.—Alfred gasped for breath; his very soul was convulsed with rage. — Count D'Ollifont

with some vehemence again insisted on her complying with his request:—she answered she would die first, and burst into a flood of tears:—he then began to force her into the carriage.

“Your brother, now, madam,” said the count, “is not here to encourage your pride, or frustrate my wishes.”—She screamed and fainted.

“Damnable villain!” exclaimed Alfred:—“know thou art mistaken;—for you now behold him ready to protect the honour of his house, by crushing to the earth that wretch who dare seduce his sister!”

While he uttered these words, Matilda remained in the arms of one of the count’s servants, insensible.—Leonard, who had dreaded his master’s violence of temper by the pistols he had

taken in his pockets, determined to be near at the time, to assist his young lady;—he accordingly waited with a hackney coach, the same that stood near the count's chariot.—He immediately ran to the assistance of Matilda, forced her from the footman, and placed her in the vehicle he had hired.

During this time count D'Ollifont was struck motionless: he could hardly believe himself awake: but the figure of the enraged Frenchman, who had now unmasked, plainly confirmed the truth.

“ I was only,” said he with a smile, “ going to conduct your sister to sir Peter's.”

“ Liar! villain!” exclaimed Alfred, thou wast going to take her to a place where, unprotected, she must have sunk

beneath thy diabolical intentions:—nay more,” continued he in a low voice, “ I strongly suspect thee to be the murderer of her father !”

He started, stood about a minute in a thoughtful posture, and then uttered with a curse.—“ Desperate causes require desperate remedies !” — pulled a pistol from his side pocket, and fired at his adversary :—owing to his agitation, the ball passed, and Alfred remained unhurt :— but he instantly discharged one at the count, who fell, and every spark of life seemed extinguished.— The coachman and the footman cried their master was murdered, and instantly seized the young foreigner, who made no resistance, but seemed buried in a rêverie; till the magician, whom he had noticed in the rooms, came up.

“ I see,” said he, “ there has been
bloody

bloody work here;—but punishment has fallen on the right person.”—He unmasked, and discovered the features of Mr. Milverne.

The men still kept their hold of Alfred: but no crowd had assembled, as they were some distance from the doors, and in a private street.—Mr. Milverne took the part of his friend, soon disengaged him from confinement, and with the assistance of Leonard, who had by this time made himself known, forced him to the coach.—They promised the man a large reward, if he would drive as fast as possible towards the first stage to Dover.

The horses, which had not been out in the day, travelled with the utmost speed;—and the driver, in hopes of the money, failed not to exert his abilities

in keeping up their pace, insomuch that he brought them to an inn at Dartford by eight in the morning.

During the time of their journey, Matilda learnt from her brother the whole affair, and plainly perceived they must be plunged into new difficulties in consequence of the count's death.

Mr. Milverne might be suspected as the cause of it; and the idea that she should never see him more, added new pangs to those she already experienced.

Leonard informed them, when they had got some distance from town, that a packet from France had been received by the people of the house where they lodged; who had neglected
to

to give it till after his master had set off to the masquerade:—he, therefore, having no place to put it under lock and key, determined to bring it in his pocket.

This was a fortunate circumstance, as the direction confirmed it to come from M. Le Mecie: on opening it Alfred received the money he had wrote for; it gave them some comfort, as it would support them with economy for some time. But this was of little consequence when he considered his life must be sacrificed as soon as the count's death was made known in France; his interest being so great at court, as to prevent any defence from saving the person who had deprived him of his existence.

He determined, however, rather to die than cowardly shrink from justice,

and disgrace the name of a soldier.—He related to his sister his resolution; but she conjured him not to risk his life from a punctilio of honour.

“You are engaged in a just cause,” continued Matilda, “and need not be ashamed of your conduct being known to the world.” She used many other arguments, and asked him, “To whom she was to look for protection, when he was no more.”

“To God!” he exclaimed; “for among mankind all honour is lost!—I am sick of the world, Matilda,—and care not how soon I leave it.”—“Surely,” said she, “that fortitude, courage, and patience, which were the leading traits in your character, and which used to charm our departed mother, are vanished!—have you no desire to see Grasville Abbey?”—The name struck him

him to the heart.—“ Who can tell but it is ordained for you to unravel that mystery which has so long hung over our family, and been the ruin of our house?—But heaven forbid, Alfred, that I should persuade you to act contrary to that honour which for years has been the boast of our forefathers:—if, therefore, you resolve to make yourself known in France, I will cheerfully enter a convent, and take leave of a world in which I have little happiness to expect.”—Here she sighed deeply; her heart reminded her that the image of Mr. Milverne would often intrude amid those religious duties she would then be bound to perform.

Alfred continued silent:—his curiosity to see the residence of his ancestors, the hopes of finding some clue to the mystic disappearance of his father,—

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urged

urged him to adopt the plans his sister had proposed;—but his honour,—his character as an officer and a man forbade it.

Every mile he found himself farther from London his perplexity increased; nor was his determination by any means fixed, when the coach drove up to the principal inn at Dartford. Alfred handsomely rewarded the man, desired him to say nothing concerning the business he had been witness to, but give feigned answers to those who should wonder at seeing a hack so far from London.—The coachman promised faithfully to obey his orders.—They each took some refreshment, hired post horses, and set off again in less than an hour towards Dover.

Alfred during the journey informed
his

his sister that his resolutions were fixed to join his regiment, and throw himself on the mercy of his countrymen. "I scorn," said he, "to fly ignobly from a punishment I flatter myself I do not justly deserve."

Matilda shed a flood of tears, but perfectly acquiesced in his wishes, and strove to think no more of Mr. Milverne;—that was impossible, but yet she considered, the strict and awful ceremonies of a monastic life would in a course of time, erase those thoughts from her bosom.—Alfred, in some respects, was in a similar situation; his acquaintance with lady Caroline Albourne was first commenced in the midst of dissipation, yet he felt many pangs at the idea of losing her for ever. In his career of folly he had persuaded himself that he was no farther interested in the affair than

than merely the idea of being intimate with a young lady of fashion, and having an opportunity of toasting a beautiful girl; but he now plainly perceived that he loved Lady Caroline so far as to make his life uncomfortable without her.—There was also another cause for uneasiness; his debts in London were unpaid:—to the name of murderer, the appellation of swindler must be added:—a title he in some measure merited.

His silence plainly told the state of his mind; while his sister shed many tears at thoughts of their present misfortunes, and at the recollection of those happy hours she had experienced under the care of maternal tenderness,—never, never to return.

Leonard shared the sorrows of them both; yet he received some little comfort

fort at the thoughts of returning to that country where he had spent the chief part of his life. They arrived rather late at Dover; Leonard was directly dispatched to inquire what time the packet would sail, and brought word back, not till the following evening. This intelligence was extremely disagreeable to them; as they might, before that time, be recognised, taken into custody, and conducted back to London. They were necessitated, however, to await patiently the event; but Alfred reflected, with some terror, on the horrors of a jail, in a strange country, and under laws he was equally a stranger to.—Under these circumstances, they remained at the inn as private as possible.

About two hours before they were intended to sail, a man arrived post from London; he asked if any travellers were
in

in that house, who intended going to France, and was answered in the affirmative. Leonard, who by chance overheard the conversation, ran to his master, and informed him of the affair; each conjectured it to be an officer of justice, and Alfred waited with fortitude and composure the event; when they were agreeably surpris'd, by seeing the innkeeper introduce Mr. Milverne's valet.

He delivered a letter, the first sentence of which contained the following words :

“ Count D'Ollifont is not yet dead.”
—“ Thanks be to heaven!” exclaimed Alfred, and communicated the agreeable intelligence to his sister.

Mr. Milverne informed him, that he
was

was kept in custody till late in the morning, when he procured bail; being then taken before a magistrate, he explained the whole affair, and was honourably cleared.—He further informed him that the count's indisposition was very uncertain, and advised him by no means to remain in England, or make himself known in France, as count D'Ollifont had many friends in that country, who, immediately as they knew of the event, would, through particular interest at court, place him in the Bastille for life, even if the former should recover of his wound.

In the latter part of the letter he mentioned Matilda with the utmost tenderness, pitied her situation, and intreated Alfred by no means to run hazards, through false notions of honour, and leave his sister destitute of protection.—

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He concluded with saying, he thought they had better pass over as quick as possible to Italy, but requested he would send word what part they resolved to visit, as he himself hoped to join them in a few weeks.

Alfred wrote an answer, expressing his gratitude for the gentlemanlike and friendly treatment he had received; informed him that he had at first resolved to throw himself on the laws of his country, although he knew them to be severe where a courtier or a man of interest was concerned:—but that his letter had entirely altered his resolution, and that he now intended to travel as fast and as privately as possible towards Italy:—that the hope of seeing him there, and making proper apologies for the strange behaviour he had been guilty of towards him, would in a great measure

sure alleviate the disagreeable manner of his journey. — He concluded with his sister's thanks for his kind inquiries, and the equal pleasure she would enjoy with himself on seeing Mr. Milverne in a short interval of time.

This letter was given to the valet, and he set off immediately.—The vessel set sail a short time after, and Leonard informed his master, while they were crossing the Channel, that he had learned from Mr. Milverne's servant, that the anonymous letter he had received was sent by that gentleman;—for that he, the valet, was employed by his master to draw the plan of proceedings from the count's confidential servant, whom he contrived to intoxicate with liquor, and then communicated to Mr. Milverne the intelligence he had received.

Alfred

Alfred was vexed that Leonard did not inform him of this circumstance sooner, that he might have returned the money he received, and acknowledged the obligation.

Matilda was still more attached to him: she was happy in the change of sentiments which his letter had caused in her brother, and looked forward with a considerable degree of pleasure for the time when he should join them abroad.

After a pleasant voyage of a few hours, they found themselves landed in their native country—but in a far different situation from that they were in when they left it:—then they were honoured and respected by all, and afraid of meeting no one:—now they were under misfortunes and concealment,

ment, shrinking from the eyes of every beholder, like wretched outcasts of society, and terrified at being observed by every individual.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

*R. Noble,
in the Old Bailey.*

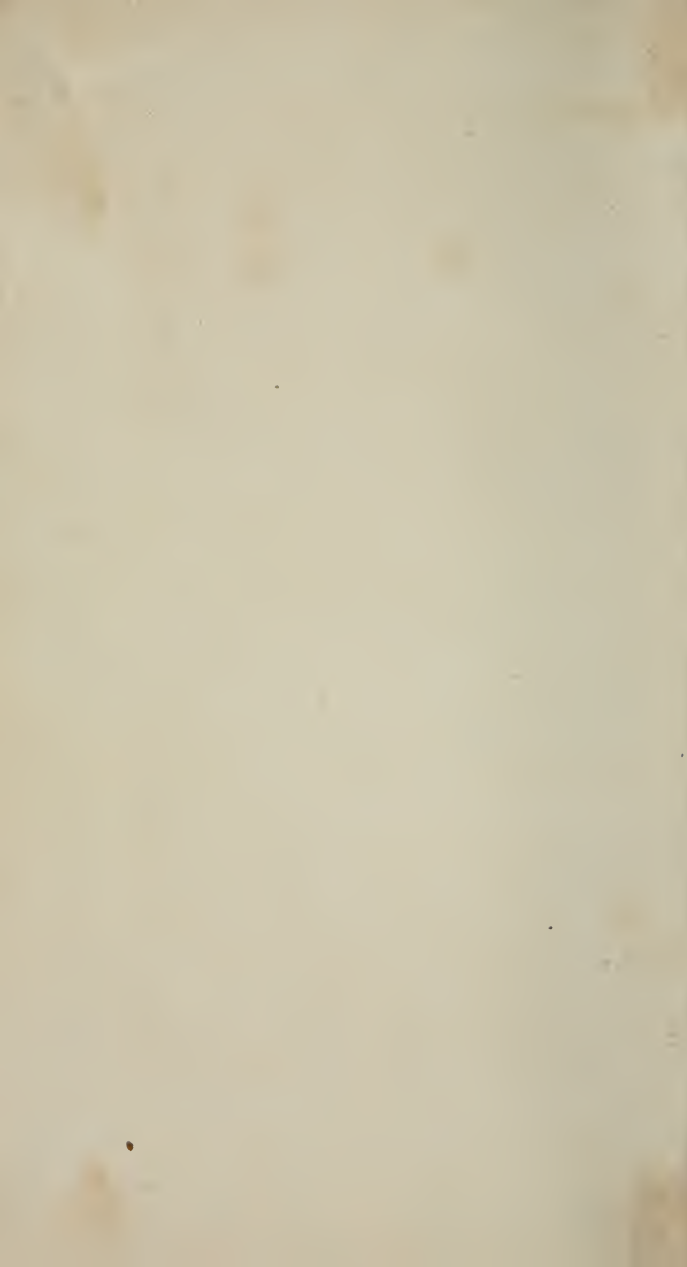
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